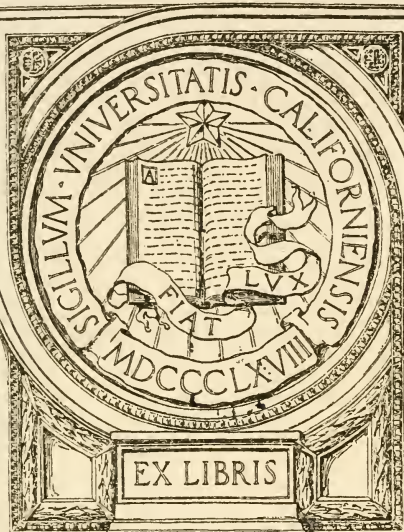


THE HISTORY
OF
BANNOCKBURN
BARRON

BY
J. H. BARRON

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BRUCE OF BANNOCKBURN.

THE BRUCE OF BANNOCKBURN

BEING A TRANSLATION OF

THE GREATER PORTION OF
BARBOUR'S "BRUCE."

BY

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STIRLING :

ENEAS MACKAY, 43 MURRAY PLACE.

First Published

- 1914

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PREFACE.

As this year is the sexcentenary of the Battle of Bannockburn, Scotsmen may naturally be expected to turn with peculiar interest to the old poem, which is the source of nearly all that is known about the heroic king of Scotland and his great victory. At the celebration of such an anniversary it is to be hoped that all will be anxious to know exactly what deeds Robert Bruce actually did, and the very words that he spoke. It is in this hope that the present version of Barbour's *Bruce* is offered to the public. Such a modernisation might be regarded as unnecessary, because the original work is easily intelligible. But unfortunately, in spite of its great interest, the poem is very little read, except by students. The obsolete language, and still more the antiquated spelling, seem to have a powerfully deterrent effect upon the general reader. The translator has attempted, as far as the exigences of rhyme and metre allow, faithfully to reproduce the whole of Barbour, and nothing but Barbour, up to the conclusion of the account of the Battle of Bannockburn. He has, therefore, followed the original line by line, and added no such embellishments of poetical diction as would make the modern version unlike the plain, straightforward story so well told in the reign of the first of our Stewart kings. As it would be impossible to write a full commentary without repeating much of the information already provided in the learned editions of Skeat and Mackenzie, only a few casual notes have been appended to the translation.



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INTRODUCTION.

LITTLE of interest is known about John Barbour, except the information derived from the internal evidence of his famous epic. It would appear from his surname that he was descended from a Norman barber, or from a barber employed by Normans, just as on the same evidence his contemporary Chaucer must have had a Norman shoemaker or hosier for one of his ancestors. As in the case of Chaucer, the chief facts known about Barbour's life are those that happen to be mentioned in official documents. Unfortunately the entries made in the public accounts were not intended to satisfy the curiosity of posterity, and do not tell us what we should most like to know about famous men of letters. However, we should be thankful for such information as they happen to afford. Although Barbour was born about 1320, the first fact recorded of him is that in 1357, when he was already Archdeacon of Aberdeen, he with three scholars was granted a safe conduct that he might go to study at Oxford. In the same year he was appointed by the Archbishop of Aberdeen to be one of the commissioners who were to meet at Edinburgh and consider how the ransom of David II., then a prisoner in England, should be paid. In 1364 and 1365 safe conducts were again granted to him and to the knights in his company for visits to England, and in the latter year to proceed to St. Denis, near Paris. In 1368 a safe conduct was provided for him and two attendants to travel through the dominions of the king of England, by land and sea, for the purpose of studying in France. In 1372 he was appointed

clerk of audit of the king's household. Then follow records of various payments made to him, and in 1378, Robert II. granted "dilecto clerico nostro Johanni Barber" a pension of twenty shillings sterling to him and his heirs for ever. This pension in 1380 he assigned to the dean and chapter of Aberdeen to pay for masses for the souls of himself and his relations. From the king he also received a gift of £10 in 1377 and sums of £5 and £6 13s. 4d. in 1386, and from 1388 to his death in 1395 ten pounds yearly "pro suo fideli servicio nobis impenso," from which it is evident that Robert II. appreciated the worth of the tribute in verse that Barbour had paid to the great ancestor to whose name and crown he succeeded.

Barbour's *Bruce* is the first complete Scottish literary work that has survived the wreck of ages. On the strength of it Barbour may justly claim the title of the Father of Scottish Poetry, and he may be regarded as a not unworthy forerunner of Burns and Scott. His influence on later poets has been considerable, and would have been much greater but for the accident of the captivity in England of James I. That prince by his English education became a disciple of Chaucer, and brought back with him to Scotland his own poem, the *King's Quhair*, a poem in the Chaucerian style far superior to any work of Chaucer's English admirers and imitators. Henceforth the Chaucerian influence became predominant for a long time in Scottish poetry, as is apparent from the works of Henryson, Gawain Douglas, and Dunbar. The influence of Barbour, after inspiring the metrical histories of Blind Harry and Andrew Wyntoun, was extinguished for a time to reappear in the golden age of English Literature in Patrick Gordon's *Famous History of the Renowned and Valiant Prince Robert, surnamed the Bruce* (1613); in John Harvey's poem on the same subject, published in 1729; and at a still later date in Scott's *Lord of the Isles and Castle Dangerous*.

As a national epic intended to express historical truths in a poetical form, Barbour's *Bruce* may be compared to the epic poems of Naevius and Ennius. Inasmuch as it relates the events of one particular war, it more nearly resembles the poem of Naevius on the first Punic war than the survey of the whole history of Rome given in the *Annales* of Ennius. In his skilful management of his rather too abundant material Barbour may stand comparison with other epic poets of wider reputation. He carefully provides for the unity of his story by the due subordination of all the other heroes of the struggle for national independence to Bruce, their king and leader. Just as in Spenser's *Fairy Queen* and Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, the great knights of the round table perform deeds of valour in separate parts of the two poems, but Arthur is the paramount hero endowed with superior greatness, in like manner Barbour never allows us to forget Bruce, the central hero, by dwelling too long on the exploits of Douglas, Randolph, or Edward Bruce. All these heroes are given due honour in various passages throughout the poem, but their subordination to the king is carefully reserved. Thus in the ninth book, Barbour, while recounting Edward Bruce's victories in Galloway, forbears to relate the whole story, although it might furnish material for many romances (ix. 491), and in the eulogy with which he concludes the account of the successful campaign sums up his worthiness by remarking that he might have rivalled any of his contemporaries *excepting only his brother*.

After a rather long introduction, the romance proper begins at the four hundred and forty-fifth line of the first book with the bargain between Bruce and Sir John Comyn, the betrayal of which led to Bruce's flight from London, to the murder of Comyn, and to the coronation at Scone. The central point in the narrative is the crowning victory of Bannockburn. It is not unlikely that Barbour originally intended the great battle to be

not only the climax but also the conclusion of his poem. The lines at which the present translation ends were perhaps the termination of an earlier edition of the poem than the one that has come down to us. Afterwards he may have found leisure to indite the less interesting matter that follows, namely, the Irish campaigns and the successive invasions of Scotland by the English and of England by the Scots. But in the latter portion of the narrative also poetic unity is well preserved until the narrative appropriately comes to a termination with the death of Bruce, the expedition to Spain, and the burial of Douglas in his own church of St. Bride and of the heart of Bruce in the Abbey of Melrose. Thus the poem ends with the death and burial of Bruce and his dearest friend, the one hero who has the honour of having his name coupled with his king's in the introductory verses at the beginning of the poem (i. 28-29).

The same principle of subordination to preserve the unity of the poem by grouping everything round the central hero is followed in the characterisation which forms an important feature of the work. There are special sketches giving the external appearance as well as the characters of Douglas and Randolph, but the greatness of Bruce and his chief characteristics are revealed more fully by successive touches all through the poem, not only by his actions, but also by the casual remarks and set speeches attributed to him. Unfortunately, in the case of Bruce, Barbour does not satisfy the curiosity of posterity by giving any description of the outward man. He tells us that Randolph was of middle height and that his face was broad, pleasant, and fair (x. 285-287), and that Douglas was not remarkable for beauty, that his hair was black, his countenance somewhat grey, that he was lean, broad-shouldered, and large-boned, and that he had a slight lisp (i. 381-399) ; but no such details are given to enable us to form in our mind's eye a true portrait of Bruce himself.

With this exception we have throughout the poem a tolerably rich supply of significant facts, by help of which we can infer what kind of man the hero king of Scotland really was, and recognise the characteristics that made him popular with high and low to an extent attained by none of his successors on the throne of Scotland, except James IV. His wonderful exploits in hand to hand combat give evidence of his great skill in the use of arms. He not only wielded with power and address the usual knightly weapons, but could also on occasion employ with effect the humbler bow and arrow (v. 624, vii. 585). His remarkable strength of arm was displayed when he picked up one of his enemies and laid him across his saddle bow (iii. 136), and again on the plain of Bannockburn by the blow which clove the headpiece and head of Sir Henry Bohun and broke his good battle-axe in two (xii. 56, 57). No doubt his gallant bearing in war attracted many followers to his side, and kept them faithful in an age not famous for unswerving loyalty (iii. 741-762). But he was also recommended by gentler traits in his character. The well-known story of how he risked a battle at a disadvantage from consideration for the sufferings of a poor laundry woman is recorded in the account of his Irish campaign. The army was all ready to march, when he heard that a poor laundress was in pain and too ill to be moved. So he countermanded the marching orders, remarking that it would be a pity to leave her in such distress, for "there was no man who would not feel pity for a woman in such extremity" (xvi. 280). The same kindly feeling is shown in several passages earlier in the poem. When the Queen and the other ladies went away to Kildrummy, he gave up all the horses to them, and he and his followers had to trudge on foot over the mountains (iii. 353-357). He wept tears of joy when reunited to his friends after a long separation (iii. 511), and was deeply moved to compassion by the recital of

their woes (iii. 549). He was distinguished in a high degree by the knightly virtue of liberality, and rewarded his followers with unsparing hand (ii. 173, x. 256, 267-275). His merciful treatment of his enemies in war does him great honour. In spite of the horrible cruelty with which Edward I. treated the captives brought to him from Kil-drummy, we do not hear of any reprisals made by Bruce. On his deathbed he repented of the number of innocent persons who met their death in his wars. This is an unavoidable misfortune incident to all wars, but we hear of no vindictive act of cruelty committed by Bruce, and his example must have had a considerable effect in mitigating the horrors of the long succession of later wars between Scotland and England. He could be extremely generous in his treatment of a fallen enemy (xiii. 512-513, 533-536, xviii. 544), and must thereby often, as in the case of Sir Philip Mowbray (xiii. 543-546), have converted a gallant foe into a faithful friend. He was also distinguished by the imaginative and romantic cast of mind generally found in great leaders of men. His rebuke to Randolph on the eve of the battle of Bannockburn is couched in the language of poetry (xi. 522), and is indeed almost the only specimen of fine poetic phraseology to be found in the whole poem. We have therefore good reason to conclude that in the figurative language employed we have the actual words uttered by Bruce, and not a fiction of Barbour's. From another passage we learn that Bruce resembled Achilles (*Il.* ix. 189) in his delight in stories of the famous exploits wrought by warriors renowned in former ages. On the banks of Loch Lomond he comforted his weary followers by merrily reading to them the romance of Fierabras, and how the peers of Charlemagne were besieged in the city of Egrymore (iii. 436-466). From all this it would appear that Bruce's mind was imaginative and refined by the best education that the age could afford, so that we may well believe an

interesting record given of him by Patrick Gordon, although it attributes to him familiarity with Latin. In the preface to the later Bruce epic, composed by that poet in the beginning of the seventeenth century, we read that the afflicted king in his wanderings "would always repeat these verses following :—

Ni me Scotorum libertas prisca moveret,
Non mala tot paterer orbis ob imperium.

—*Robertus Brussius.*

These verses were written and subscribed with his own hand in his manual-book, which he always carried about with him, and was extant within these few years." Perhaps the false quantity may be regarded as an indication that the couplet was genuine, and not the work of some priestly scholar. Like Aeneas (Aen. i. 209), with whom he is compared by an English chronicler, Bruce sometimes spoke cheerful words to his followers when he was himself oppressed by black care (iii. 300-302). Plutarch relates how, before the battle of Cannæ, Hannibal "rallied one of his officers jestingly, who noticed the overwhelming numbers of the Romans ; those near him laughed ; and as any feeling at such a moment is contagious, the laugh was echoed by others, and the soldiers seeing their great general in such a mood, were satisfied that he was sure of victory." Much the same effect must have been produced by Bruce's cheery humour when he familiarly jested with his men before the battle of Loudon, and deigned to aid and mingle in the mirth they made, for

"Trained in camps, he knew the art
To win the soldier's hardy heart."

We are not informed what were the jests that he made on this particular occasion (viii. 384, 385), but his possession of a fund of humour is evinced by the clever way in which he evaded the charge of rashness brought against him after his encounter with Sir Henry Bohun. Instead of excusing his

conduct, he made no reply except to lament the breaking of his good battle axe (xii. 95). At another time we find him making a speech of good-natured banter to the Earl of Lennox (iii. 645-654). In ix. 232 he humorously describes the boast of his enemies as promoting his recovery better than any medicine could have done. This humorous tendency comes out in the story told by the chroniclers of his exacting a poem in honour of his victory as a ransom from Baston, the Carmelite monk who had been brought into Scotland by Edward II. to celebrate his overthrow, and again in his attitude to the Pope, when he was addressed as "Robert de Brus, governing the Kingdom of Scotland." and declared that he could not take the liberty of opening a letter so addressed, as there were many other noble men of the same name taking part in the government of Scotland, for any one of whom the letter might be intended.

In several of his reported sayings Barbour's Bruce manifests an engaging modesty about his own exploits which reminds us of Shakespeare's hero-king of England, who would not have his bruised helmet and bended sword borne before him through the city. When he and his foster-brother were attacked by five men, he killed four of them with his own sword to his foster-brother's one. Instead of taking pride in his superiority he ingeniously accounted for the larger number he had slain by his having been luckily afforded an opportunity of delivering an unexpected blow at one of the two men attacking his companion (vi. 667-670). On another occasion, when complimented on having slain three enemies, he attributed the death of two of them to God and his hound (vii. 490). Bruce seems also to have resembled Shakespeare's Henry V. in his readiness to converse in a friendly manner with all sorts and conditions of men and women (iv. 470-488, v. 544, vii. 241-263, xi. 264), and his consequent knowledge of human nature. His insight into the mixture of

good and evil in human character saved his life when he made a surprising appeal to the chivalry of three ruffianly assassins, to which they at once responded (vii. 439-450). One cannot help being sorry for the poor wretches who were thus induced to forego their vantage and sacrifice their lives to a point of honour. Bruce would hardly have done so himself. He did not at Bannockburn play the futile part of the vain knight-errant as his descendant did at Flodden, but arrayed his army in a strong position with secret pits cunningly prepared for the destruction of England's mail-clad chivalry. Layamon's Arthur would not attack even a dragon asleep, but woke it up that it might have the fairplay dear to all true Englishmen. But into Bruce's mouth Barbour puts a justification of killing enemies asleep (v. 83-88), when you have a chance, on the Virgilian principle,

"Dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirit."

In Barbour's poem we can see that Bruce was not disposed to sacrifice his great enterprise to any strict observance of copy-book morality. The only other greatly successful rebel against the whole power of England is held up as an example of a man who never told a lie. Such regard for truth cannot be ascribed to Bruce. When Douglas and Sir Robert Keith brought back information of the magnificence and power of the English army, he deliberately told them to announce in public that the English were in poor array, and so prevented his army from feeling discouraged at the prospect of the coming battle (xi. 490). In l. 624, we find him saving his life by making a promise that he had no intention of keeping. In fact, Bruce was more akin in character to David, Themistocles, and Shivaji than to such immaculate patterns of virtue as Aristides and Washington.

Indeed, a fairly close parallel after the manner of Plutarch might be drawn between the national heroes of Scotland and Maharashtra. The Scot-

tish Bruce and the Indian Shivaji both made themselves notorious by killing a dangerous enemy at what was ostensibly intended for a peaceful conference. Both of them, at or before the fateful interview, showed their mastery of the art of dissimulation; Shivaji by the affectation of abject humility with which he approached the Muhammadan general, Bruce by concealing his deadly hatred under the smiling face with which he handed the indenture to Comyn (II., 34). Yet there was a great difference between the two actions in spite of their apparent similarity. Shivaji's killing of Afzul Khan was coolly premeditated, and he prepared for it by laying his head at his mother's feet and imploring her blessing. Bruce, as Mr. Murison points out, had no intention of killing Comyn, or he would not have chosen a church as their place of meeting. We must remember that he was subject to fits of passionate anger, in one of which he felled with his own hand a disobedient follower (xvi. 128). Comyn would also seem to have been a passionate man, for at an earlier conference in 1299 he quarrelled with Bruce and caught him by the throat. It might naturally be expected that, when such fiery-tempered rivals met, they should quickly proceed from reproaches to deadly taunts, and from deadly taunts to blows. Certainly Bruce could never have dreamt of such an act of deliberate assassination as Shivaji perpetrated by the hands of his emissaries at Jowli. But apart from the striking but superficial parallel between the killing of Comyn and of Afzul Khan, and in spite of the contrast between the slight figure of the Maratha and the tall muscular frame of the northern warrior, there are many points of agreement between their careers and characters. Both were inspired to great deeds by reading stories of heroes famed in Epic and Romance. Both began their careers as rebels and raised themselves by valour and conduct till they were firmly established as kings over

united nations who were indebted to them for their national existence. Both combined with valour more or less of pliancy, so that they could on occasion bend to overwhelming force rather than ruin themselves and their people by foolhardy resistance. Both of them in peaceful intervals of social intercourse with their subjects showed themselves to be at heart kindly men, who were not only the kings but the fathers of their respective countries. Both of them were distinguished above their contemporaries by clemency to their enemies, though the tolerably mild abstinence from cruelty of an oriental prince was very different from the chivalrous generosity that characterised the highest type of medieval chivalry. Above all, both of them, like Nelson, Napoleon, and David, king of Israel, had an extraordinary magnetic influence over the minds of their followers, who were thereby inspired to scorn death in their service. There is a remarkable similarity between the stories of reckless bravery shown in the capture of the hill forts of the Deccan by Shivaji's devoted Marathas and the exploits of Douglas, Randolph, and Bunnock at Roxburgh, Edinburgh, and Linlithgow. This power of inspiring enthusiasm was partly due to charm of manner and partly to the fact that Bruce and Shivaji both recognised that as great a share of hazard as of honour is due to him who reigns, and were always willing to expose themselves at critical moments to death and captivity for their followers' sake. Thus it was that, by valour, wisdom, or cunning, and still more by the enthusiastic devotion they inspired, these two great leaders of men advanced from strength to strength, restored their respective countries from a depressed condition to union, freedom, power, and glory, and extorted high tributes of admiration from their bitterest enemies.

Among the companions of Bruce the first place in Barbour's narrative decidedly belongs to

James Douglas. The two heroes are companions throughout in bad and good fortune. Douglas, while still a stripling, pays his homage to Bruce before the coronation at Scone (ii. 158-174), and after twenty-three years of devoted service receives the charge of taking the king's heart to the Holy Land. They are united at the beginning of the poem in the closest bonds of friendship and loyalty, and the poem concludes with their death and burial. Their friendship grew stronger every year (ii. 170), until it was ended by death. As a champion in battle or single combat, Douglas was second only to Bruce himself. With his own hand he overthrew and killed the Earl of Richmond (xvi. 416-418), and Sir Robert Neville (xv. 496). He was so expert in the use of arms that his hands were always able to defend his face, as he himself modestly remarked to the Spaniards, who wondered at his freedom from scars (xx. 379). He was equally skilful and successful as a commander, so that of the seventy battles he fought he won no less than fifty-seven. His chivalrous nature is brilliantly displayed by his eagerness to go to the assistance of Randolph when his rival and brother in arms was hard pressed by the superior numbers of his English assailants, still more by his holding back when he saw that Randolph could win the victory without his assistance. He would not do anything to diminish the glory of his friend's exploit (xii. 108-127), thus showing the same tender regard for the honour of another that Roland showed for his own honour when he refused to blow his horn at Fontarabia. In this episode and in a previous passage when he resolved to go to Douglasdale (v. 225-251), it is interesting to notice a touch of obstinacy in his character. On both these occasions the intention of Douglas was opposed by the king, who only yielded with great reluctance to his insistence. The one great blot on his scutcheon is the horrible Douglas larder described in v. 397-410. The

extremely merciful treatment of his captives on a later occasion (viii. 508, 509) gives some support to the view of the transaction adopted by Sir George Douglas in his *Pageant of the Bruce*. It seems not improbable that the so-called "Douglas larder" was really the work of his followers whose "bitter lust of blood" and "barren, brutish impulse to destroy" he could not control.

Randolph would appear to have been equal to Douglas in personal valour, but somewhat inferior to him in vigilance and discretion. By letting Clifford's force get past him on the eve of Bannockburn, he committed a serious oversight, although he nobly retrieved it (xi. 550). At a later period, when associated with Douglas in command against the English, he recommended a rash attack (xix. 633-636), but was overruled by his associate, who by the apologue of the fox and the fisherman showed how the English foe might easily be foiled without risk of disaster. He was also less consistently faithful to his king and uncle than Douglas was. Twice he was captured and changed sides (ii. 408, 466, ix. 714, x. 264). After his capture at Methven he was an energetic supporter of the English king (vi. 520, vii. 87), until he was recaptured by Douglas. Such being the case, it is a little surprising and almost suggestive of irony that Barbour, in the elaborate sketch of his character given in x. 274-304, lays especial stress on his delight in loyalty and abhorrence of treason. However, from the time of his second capture he never swerved from his allegiance, and won for himself the honour of being coupled with Douglas ever after in the roll of fame.

Sir Edward Bruce is described as second only to his brother in valour and generalship. He did splendid work for his king and country when, in a year's space, he won thirteen castles in Galloway (ix. 654, 655). At the Battle of Bannockburn he commanded one of the four divisions of the Scottish army (xi. 320). His great defect was that

his valour was not governed by discretion, so that it was liable to take the form of foolhardiness (ix. 658). For this he was on one occasion sharply rebuked by his brother (xvi. 245-254), who was himself distinguished by the wise observance of the golden mean (vi. 369-370). He seems to have been very passionate. When Sir Walter Rose, his paramour's brother, was killed at Bannockburn, he was so overwhelmed with grief that he took no pleasure in the great victory (xiii. 481). After the battle he thought Scotland was too small for his brother and himself (xiv. 4, 5). So he made a bold attempt to gain an independent crown in Ireland, and, after winning many victories against great odds, at last lost his life through his rashness. However, on other occasions his rashness had been fortunate in its results, as when he stoutly refused to re-embark from the shore of Carrick (v. 65-70), and again when his rash agreement with Mowbray led to the battle of Bannockburn (xi. 38).

Barbour, according to the precept inculcated on epic poets by Aristotle, does not obtrude himself much on his readers. Nevertheless from the poem we can come to some conclusions about his tastes and talents. He shows his learning by his elaborate exposition of Aristotle's doctrine of the golden mean as applied to the virtue of courage, and of Plato's doctrine of the knowledge of contraries (vi. 241), and by his many references to classical mythology and legend. He also gives one reference, tantalising in its brevity and singleness, to the story of Fingal (iii. 68-70), which he may have heard sung by Ossianic bards in the original Gaelic. Although he was an ecclesiastic, Barbour keeps theological disquisitions out of his poem. Occasionally he indulges in moral and psychological meditation, as in iii. 513-534, where he discourses on the nature of tears of joy. In that passage he rather sarcastically remarks that women have the faculty of shedding tears whenever it pleases them to do so. In an earlier passage he

shows his knowledge of the deeper springs in the hearts of women, and pays them a noble tribute (ii. 519-530, 552). Love, he says, can enable weak women to endure willingly the greatest pain for their husbands' sakes. Yet he does not give a very attractive picture of wedlock, which he calls the hardest state of bondage (i. 266). In many passages he shows the medieval fondness for sententious reflections derived from his own experience or from the wisdom of the ancients. Thus he quotes with approval the proverb that pride and fire are two things that cannot be hidden (iv. 119), and the aphorism of Cato that bids us be warned by the misfortunes of others (i. 121). He has an explanation ready for the drowsiness that follows repletion (vii. 175). Every now and then he reminds us of the power of God and His providential government of the world (i. 456, 608, xi. 26-28, xii. 361-364). Otherwise supernatural machinery such as we find in the Homeric poems, in the *Aeneid* and later in the *Jerusalem Delivered* and the *Henriade*, is conspicuous by its absence throughout the poem. Barbour was evidently a god-fearing matter of fact man, who, for the age in which he lived, was so remarkably free from superstition that he could not introduce supernatural agency into his professedly truthful narrative without doing violence to his conscience. He seems even to have had his doubts about astrology (iv. 674-747), and, though of course he recognised the inspiration of the prophets in the Bible, he ironically remarked that there was but a small crop of prophets in his day (iv. 686, 687). Like Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, and Scott, he seems inclined to adopt a contemptuous attitude towards the common people (ii. 500-510, viii. 275-277), although he gives a long and appreciative account of how William Bunnock, by valour and stratagem, captured the strong tower of Linlithgow. In narrating the farmer's exploit he turns aside for a moment, as Homer often does in his similes, from the narrative of fierce warfare to dwell

upon the charm of peaceful country life, and describe the happy autumn fields. In like manner he opens the fifth book with one of those celebrations of the joy of spring-time which are so frequent in medieval poets. The description of the life on the mountains in the end of the second book also seems to show that, though Barbour's task was to narrate scenes of blood, he had a natural predilection for country life, and fully appreciated the attraction of peaceful nature. His patriotism and enthusiasm for freedom are shown by the whole subject of his poem, and especially by the famous eulogy of freedom in i. 225-240. Yet his patriotism does not make him unjust or harsh to Englishmen or even to Scotsmen who fought on the English side. Except when speaking of Edward I. (iv. 321-331) he shows no extreme bitterness in speaking of the enemies of his king and country. He testifies to the beauty and prowess of Edward II. (iv. 72). Sir Aymer de Valence (ii. 201, 202), Sir Philip de Mowbray (viii. 73-106) and Sir Ingram de Umfraville (ix. 501-506) are always mentioned in the most honourable terms. Sir David of Brechin has the epithet "good" conferred upon him even when he is fighting and conspiring against Bruce (viii. 401, xix. 19). The deepest sympathy and admiration are expressed for Sir Giles de Argenté, whose valour and death are described in one of the noblest passages in the poem (xiii. 295-322). Barbour's repeated visits to England, and especially his studies at Oxford, prevented him from anything like wholesale condemnation of the English foe. But generous recognition of the merits of an enemy would seem from the poem to have been characteristic not only of Barbour himself, but also of the chivalrous age in which he lived. Sir Aymer de Valence several times expresses his admiration for Bruce, especially in the high tribute paid to his dauntless resolution and invincibility in vii. 357-378. The propriety of giving due honour to enemies as well as friends is strongly asserted by

Macnaughton to Lorn (iii. 171-180), and Lorn himself pays Bruce the compliment of comparing him to the Celtic hero, Gaul (iii. 68-70). No doubt Barbour puts this praise of Bruce into the mouths of his enemies that its value may be enhanced thereby. On the other hand, the many passages in which he himself honours Bruce's enemies show that such generosity was part of his own nature. He even represents Bruce as admiring the valour of the ruffians who tried to assassinate him (v. 654, vii. 491). Barbour resembles and exceeds Homer in such chivalrous generosity. Homer, when he describes their actual deeds, commits the mistake of depreciating the valour of the Trojans, and thus unawares detracts from the glory of their conquerors. Barbour avoids this error. When he narrates the exploits of English heroes, he represents them as acting up to the high reputation they had won and deserved. Altogether the impression of Barbour's character that we derive from his poem is extremely favourable. He seems to have been a thorough gentleman, loving his friends and tolerant in his judgments of all men, shrewd and kindly, and endowed with the faculty of appreciating not only heroic valour, but also the gentler virtues, a patriotic Scotsman whose patriotism did not make him unjust to foreigners even though they might be the enemies of his country. In fact, in his character, as in his literary genius, he was a medieval Walter Scott.

From a literary point of view the great merits of the *Bruce* are the interest of the incidents, the clear characterisation of the principal actors, and the excellent arrangement of the narrative so as to produce artistic unity. Barbour also shows great skill in introducing the charm of variety into his poem by frequent alternation of speech and action. The speeches that he puts into the mouths of his characters are dramatically appropriate, and all through the poem enliven the narrative. The harangues invented for his hero on the eve of great

battles may sometimes be rather long and tiresome, but the dialogues interspersed through the poem are exceedingly lively and interesting. In one passage we come upon an ethical discussion of the propriety of praising a foe (iii. 158-180), while in another we hear the quick questions and replies exchanged between Bruce and his page at a time of deadly peril in the early morning (v. 592-601), or between him and the assassins as they rush on to attack him (v. 608-618). In Bruce's conversation with the goodwife who hospitably received the wanderer (vii. 241-263) we find an animated dialogue which seems ready-made for insertion without alteration in a drama. Another way in which Barbour avoids the tedium of monotony is by the skilful change of scene and point of view. Just as in the *Iliad* we are taken back and forwards between the battlefield and Grecian camp and the city of Troy, and sometimes enter the halls of Olympus, so in Barbour's *Bruce* at one time we are with the hunted king, and then listen in imagination to what his pursuers are saying to one another. Later on in the poem, as the climax of the great struggle approaches, this procedure is followed with most excellent effect. The anxiety felt through the country at the prospect of all the fortunes of the war being risked in one great battle is expressed in the reproachful speech that Bruce addresses to his brother, when he hears of the agreement about Stirling Castle. Next we pass to the English court, and learn how King Edward and his warlike barons look forward with confidence to the certainty of gaining a great victory. Then the whole force of his kingdom is assembled for a pitched battle. Soon after comes the impressive description of the advance from Berwick of the greatest army that England ever put into the field. This is followed by an account of the Scottish army mustering for battle, and by Bruce's address to his council. The encounter between Clifford and Randolph is seen through the eyes of Douglas and Randolph,

just as the assault on Front de Boeuf's castle is seen through the eyes of Rebecca. The disheartening effect on the English army of Clifford's defeat and of the death of De Boune is vividly brought home to us by the short speech summarising the feelings of the rank and file of the English army (xii. 359-364). In this manner, monotony is avoided, and the reader's interest is kept from flagging until at last the two main armies join in battle.

Thus we see that, as a narrative, Barbour's *Bruce* attains a high pitch of constructive excellence, and may bear comparison with the best work of Chaucer, Scott, or Morris. On the other hand, it must be candidly admitted that there are few passages in the poem which show much poetic imagination or descriptive power. The metre never attains the smoothness of Gower or the power and melody of Chaucer, although it is more regular and runs more easily than the verse of Lydgate and Hoccleve. The sentences are usually concluded by full stops not at the end but in the middle of the rhymed couplets. A similar practice is followed in *Beowulf* and other alliterative poems. In such cases the object of this arrangement is to make the poem more easily remembered. When the sentence ended in the middle of a couplet, the reciter would be helped by the rhyme, or in *Beowulf* by the alliteration, to remember how the next sentence began. Barbour's language is generally rather bald and without distinction. This no doubt suits fairly well the plain straightforward narrative, which commands attention by the abundance and character of the incidents narrated, but even the rougher audiences for which it was composed would have taken more delight in the story if it had been told throughout in a more elevated style. There are, however, a few passages in which our author tries not unsuccessfully to rise to the occasion. Such are the often quoted and enthusiastic lines in praise of freedom (i. 225-240), the description of the English armies advancing to Loudon (viii. 225-

234), and to Berwick (xi. 125-140), of the stormy current flowing near Rathlin (iii. 684-720), and of the last charge of Giles de Argenté (xiii. 295-318). His stories of battle and single combat are carefully worked out, but he does not appear to be animated with the joy of battle which Homer and Scott felt in their own hearts, and were therefore able to communicate to the hearts of their readers. Yet his battles are more realistic than those described in the *Iliad*. We do not find in the *Bruce* the opposing armies looking quietly on while one leader after another engages in an interchange of long speeches with the enemy whom he is about to attack. But Homer by his imagination and fire makes the improbable and impossible for the time seem real, while Barbour's long battle-pieces, in which, with the exception of a tendency to exaggerate the odds against his countrymen, he introduces nothing that may not have happened in an actual battle, leave us cold. This is due to his comparative deficiency of poetic imagination and the excessive plainness of his style. Like the author of *Beowulf*, he very seldom indulges in metaphors, similes, or any other poetical embellishments; but we do not find in the *Bruce* anything like the power rising to sublimity that in the description of Grendel's cave in *Beowulf* compensates for the absence of beauty and elegance of style. We may sum up the matter by saying that Barbour was a skilful and artistic story teller, but not a great poet.

In the opinion of several critics Barbour is regarded as a great story-teller in the dyslogistic sense of the word. His claim to any near approach to historical accuracy has been violently impugned. He himself, in the opening lines of the poem, earnestly prays God to give him grace to tell nothing but the truth. Nevertheless, though this was the ideal he aimed at, we should not expect to find in his work the strict regard for accurate statement of facts that characterises the modern school of history. All that we can say with confidence is that he

never deliberately perverted the truth. Although many of his details are surprisingly confirmed by extant historical documents, in many other cases his statements are inconsistent with fact. His chronology is generally vague and so often wrong that we must conclude that he was as careless about the exact order of events as Shakespeare and Scott were in their historical fictions, and for the same reason, because he preferred to group events artistically and re-construct his scenes dramatically in the order in which they would be most intelligible and impressive. Also his profession of truthfulness must be understood as qualified by the license generally allowed to historians until quite recently. Barbour certainly did not think that he was unvarnished when he followed the example of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Livy, and put into his hero's mouth the speeches that he might naturally be expected to deliver on various occasions. Sometimes, indeed, the speeches attributed to Bruce are not even natural in the circumstances in which they were uttered. At the surprise of Methven the short call to arms (ii. 319-320) might really have been spoken, but Bruce would certainly not have kept his followers inactive at such a crisis to listen to the longer oration that follows. We may also suppose that in the lively conversations interspersed in the narrative Barbour assumed the right freely to dramatise the situation by providing his characters with such remarks as they might have made. In some cases we may have in his pages the very words that Bruce actually spoke. King Robert is recorded to have had "the gift of fluent speech in the vernacular, delightful to listen to," and no doubt his devoted followers hung upon his words and treasured many of his sayings in their memory. But no one could have overheard the conversation reported at the end of the sixth book between Bruce and his foster brother, who was soon afterwards killed. What was said on that occasion was only known to Bruce himself. He would no

doubt, when rejoined by his friends, tell the story of the encounter with his usual modesty, and perhaps in after life, like his descendant, Charles II., he was fond of narrating what had happened in his time of adversity. Thus the gist of several of the dialogues given in Barbour's *Bruce* was probably derived from the accounts given of the incidents by the hero of the poem. Barbour is sure to have received from his informants accounts of the heroic deeds of Bruce and his paladins which had been exaggerated by rumour. But seeing what a reputation they had won by their valour, it is difficult to point to any of these accounts that can be condemned as incredible. Macaulay well remarks that Achilles "driving all Troy and Lycia before him, and choking Scamander with dead, was only a magnificent exaggeration of the real hero who, strong, fearless, accustomed to the use of weapons, guarded by a shield and helmet of the best Sidonian fabric, and whirled along by horses of Thessalian breed, struck down with his own right arm foe after foe." The same remark may reasonably be made on the account that Barbour gives of Bruce when he choked the ford in Carrick with the corpses of fourteen Gallovidians (vi. 323). On that occasion we are reminded that the hero, being armed in proof, had little to fear from the arrows of his assailants, who were probably destitute of defensive armour, so that the exploit recorded may not even have been an exaggeration of the truth. Also Barbour was avowedly a partisan, and, when he heard various accounts of the same action, might naturally and excusably prefer the one most creditable to his hero and his countrymen. Thus in the account of the death of Comyn he relates at length the version that was most favourable to Bruce, but has at any rate the honesty to mention that other accounts were given of the matter (ii. 39, 40). In such cases he only allows his own side the benefit of the doubt, as Dr. Johnson did in his Parliamentary reports, when he took

care that the Whig dogs did not get the best of it, but he does not seem ever to relate what he knows to be untrue.

With these limitations Barbour's claim to truthfulness may be maintained. Though he calls his poem a romance, he never ventures to invent a single incident out of his own imagination. His strict observance of this abstention is in strong contrast with the liberties that later poets took with the history of Bruce's wars. Patrick Gordon makes Douglas and Bruce, at their first meeting, have a fight before they recognise each other. In the Homeric style he represents the battle of Bannockburn as mainly consisting of single combats between the leaders on either side. In spite of his candid admission that "no general ought a combat for to wage," he makes King Edward exchange hard blows with De la Haye, Aymer de Valence with Edward Bruce, the Earl of Gloucester with Douglas, Umphraville with Randolph, the Earl of Hereford with Walter the Steward, and after a terrific combat King Robert Bruce kills De Argentine. Even Scott without authority immolates the "grim Earl of Colonsay" and four nameless Scotsmen as victims on the spear of De Argentine. Both Gordon and Scott put into the mouth of Bruce sympathetic references to the cruel fate of Wallace. In Barbour's *Bruce* the name of Wallace is not even mentioned. This omission is the more remarkable when we remember that Wallace was closely associated with the father of James Douglas. Wallace and Bruce are now united permanently in the popular imagination through the influence of the great war lyric of Burns. Probably in actual fact there was no love lost between Bruce and the hero of comparatively humble birth who maintained the cause of his rival Baliol and put the great nobles of Scotland to shame by his valour and unbending resolution. This is confirmed by the fact that in 1307 Bruce employed in honourable service Sir John Menteith,

the betrayer of Wallace. Thus it is probable that Barbour could not, without violation of his conscientious regard for truth, have represented Bruce as taking Wallace for his pattern. Let us however be permitted to indulge the pious hope that in the other world the two great heroes of the Scottish war of independence may be found to be *concordes animae* and that, all their past differences forgotten, they now many a time and oft hold sweet converse together on the past and present fortunes of their beloved country, if indeed *ea cura quietos sollicitat*.

The greatest of Barbour's supposed violations of truth has still to be considered. He is accused by Sir Herbert Maxwell and others of rolling three Bruces into one, either from ignorance or in order to preserve the unity of his epic. It is, however, ridiculous to suppose that Barbour, a scholar and man of high position writing only about half a century after the events narrated, could possibly have confused Bruce the Competitor, the Competitor's son, and King Robert Bruce, especially when we remember that he had made a special study of the genealogy of the royal family in his *Stewartis Orygenalle*. It is almost equally incredible that he should, for the artistic purpose of giving unity to the poem or for any other reason, have intended his readers to confound these three persons. By so doing he would immediately have given the lie to the claim to truthfulness that he makes in the opening verses of the poem. The history of noble families was such a popular study at this time that any well-informed person would have been able to trace the descent of King Robert Bruce from his grandfather, the Competitor. And this is just the reason why Barbour did not take the trouble to distinguish them. He did not realise that his readers in future ages would be ignorant of the genealogy of their kings, and therefore took it for granted that it would be obvious to everybody that the Robert Bruce of i. 153 was not King Robert, but King

Robert's grandfather, just as he assumes that chronological considerations would make it plain to everybody that the King Robert of xiii. 714, was not the King Robert mentioned a few lines before as reigning at the time when the poem was composed. The introduction of the hero of the romance in i. 477 as "this Lord the Bruce I spoke of ere" cannot be regarded as clearly identifying him with the Competitor mentioned in l. 153, for King Robert had also been previously mentioned in l. 27. The clause "I spak of ayr," may very well mean "of whom I spoke at an early point of the book," namely, in the introductory lines (i. 27, 28).

At the same time it must be admitted that Barbour laid himself open to misconception on this point. It is not surprising that Patrick Gordon, whose epic on Bruce is based upon Barbour's narrative, should have wrongly supposed that King Robert competed with Baliol for the crown of Scotland in 1292, and that others should have made the same mistake. Certainly lines 56 and 67 are puzzling and misleading. They cannot refer to Robert Bruce, the Competitor, as distinguished from his son and grandson, for he was not "descended from the nearest male," but actually was the nearest male (see note on i. 56), and he was not Earl of Carrick. That title was given by courtesy to his son as the husband of the Countess of Carrick, and descended of right to his grandson, King Robert Bruce. Therefore these two lines are not applicable to Bruce the Competitor, and unfortunately are applicable to his grandson. The solution of the difficulty would seem to be that in i. 52-68 Barbour is explaining the claim to the throne not of one particular Bruce but of the Bruce family, including all the three Bruces who were alive at the time of the award. Lines 53-56 will then mean that the kingdom should go to the descendants of the nearest male relative of the last king, which would imply *a fortiori* the claim of Bruce the Competitor, as he was actually the

nearest male relative. In i. 66 "the Bruce" means the head of the Bruce family, not any individual, but whoever happened to be living when the throne fell vacant. When historians tell us that in 1301 it was determined that the heir to the throne of England should bear the title of Prince of Wales, we do not limit the assertion to Edward of Carnarvon, who happened then to be heir to the throne, but extend it to all subsequent heirs. In like manner we must interpret i. 67-69 as meaning that the successive heads of the Bruce family, all three Robert Bruces, Lords of Annandale and Earls of Carrick, should one after another ascend the throne. Before leaving the subject we may notice in passing the curious fact that Burns actually committed a mistake very similar to that of which Barbour is accused. In one of his letters he describes the King defeated at Bannockburn as a "cruel but able usurper," evidently confusing Edward II. with his father.

After considering all the errors that Barbour actually committed or is supposed to have committed, we may fairly give his work about as much historical credit as we give to the history of Herodotus or the chronicles of Holinshed. He did not carefully scrutinise and sift the stories he heard about the heroic deeds of the preceding generation, as a historian of the modern school of history would have done, but gladly recorded any interesting incident that did not appear to be palpably untrue. He lived at the time when he was most likely to obtain accurate information about the life of Bruce. His visits to England gave him every opportunity of hearing the story as it appeared from an English point of view. In his youth he must have met and conversed with many who took an active part in the war of independence. In ix. 573 he informs us that he was told about Edward Bruce's Galloway campaign by Sir Alan Cathcart, who took part in it. His account of the personal appearance of Douglas was derived from

those who "saw him" (i. 388), and he refers to John Thomson as an eye-witness of events that took place in Ireland. When his information is imperfect or uncertain, he lets us know (ii. 495, vii. 74, 75, viii. 503, x. 351-356, xi. 290) that it is so. In many passages the realistic details make it difficult to believe that the narrative is fictitious. The account of Sym's grim struggle on the rampart of Roxburgh Castle (x. 413-425) was surely derived from an eye-witness or from some one who had heard the story directly from Sym himself. The short interval of fifty or sixty years that separated the events narrated from the date of the composition of the epic would in some respects be an advantage as giving time for the comparison of different accounts and the preference of that which seemed most probable. Thus, when all is considered, Barbour's narrative, though in verse, is an extremely important contribution to Scottish history. There is scarcely any period of the middle ages in which we seem to know the chief actors so well as, by the help of Barbour's poem, we know Bruce and his heroic followers. We have to wait more than two hundred years for the printing press before we find such a flood of light thrown again upon Scottish history, and even then the characters of the friends and foes of Queen Mary are hardly as distinct in our imagination as the two Bruces, Douglas, and Randolph. The historical value of Barbour's *Bruce* may be measured by the gap that would be left in Scottish history if all the information we owe to him were excised. In Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather* two hundred and two pages are devoted to the four hundred and eighty-five years that elapsed between the accession of Malcolm Canmore and the death of James V., over forty of which deal with the twenty-five years covered by Barbour's narrative. All this disproportion is due to the abundance of details with which Barbour enriched Scottish history at this momentous time. Surely for this every Scotsman owes him a deep debt of gratitude.

THE BRUCE OF BANNOCKBURN.

Book I.

- Stories to read most men are fain,
Though nought but fables they contain ;
Then twice as much we should delight,
If only they are told aright,
In stories that true facts unfold :
For first we like the story told,
And next it gives us pleasure new
8 To know that all the tale is true,
And ever men delight to hear
Tales told in words that please the ear.
So, if my wit would tell me how
To do the work, I'd venture now
A story not untrue to tell,
That it might last in memory well,
And that some men of future ages
16 Might read what's written in my pages.
For whoso these old stories reads
May see in fancy all the deeds
Performed by many a stalwart knight,
As if the actors were in sight.
And certainly they should have praise,
Our forebears who in by-gone days
Were brave and wise, and passed their life
24 In labour hard and battle strife.
Never by fear or baseness stained,
Undying honour they have gained.
Such was in this our northern land
King Robert, stout of heart and hand,
And good Sir James of Douglas too,
Who in his time was brave and true,
Whose warlike might and liberal hand

- 32 Were famed in many a distant land.
Of them I think this book to make,
And pray God for the Saviour's sake
To guide me that I may not fail
To tell a true straightforward tale.
When Alexander came to die
Who Scotland ruled in days gone by,
The land for six long years and more
- 40 Was subject to afflictions sore.
At last the barons of the State
Convened a council to debate
What prince descended from the strain
Of monarchs who before did reign,
They should elect to hold the helm,
As rightful king, of Scotland's realm.
Fell envy's power dissension bred,
- 48 And hope of calm agreement fled
For some espoused the Baliol's claim
Since by direct descent he came
From her who was the eldest born.
But others held his claim in scorn,
And said that he their king should be,
Whose birth was in as near degree,
But in a branch collateral,
- 56 Descended from the nearest male ;
Because succession to the throne
Was ruled by canons of its own,
Whereby no female might succeed
Before a male of royal breed.
The laws that gave to crowns a claim
And lower fiefs were not the same,
For then the nearest of the seed
- 64 Of kings, though female, would succeed.
If their contention should prevail,
Robert, the Bruce, of Annandale,
The Earl of Carrick ought to wear
The royal crown as rightful heir.
The baronage was so divided
That nought by them could be decided,
Until at last it was agreed
- 72 That all that either side could plead

- To Edward, England's king, be sent
That he may take the arbitrament ;
And he must swear with judgment true
To hold the scales between the two,
Who claimed to rise to such a height,
That he might reign who best had right.
This measure seemed to them the best,
- 80 For at that time was peace and rest
Betwixt the folk of either nation,
And there was no anticipation
Of evil that the plan would bring ;
Because Sir Edward, England's king,
Had been by bonds of friendship tied
To their own king who lately died,
They thought that he, like neighbour true,
- 88 Would peace and harmony renew,
And honestly the case decide ;
But these fair hopes were all belied.
Oh foolish folk ! Oh, nation blind !
Could ye not see what lay behind ?
Had ye the dangerous prospect weighed,
A better choice ye would have made.
Did ye not mark how England's king
- 96 Laboured incessantly to bring
All nations underneath his sway
That round about his kingdom lay ?
Thus Wales and Ireland he had quelled,
And by the power of armies held
Subjected in such thralldom base,
That even men of noble race
Ran as foot soldiers in his train,
- 104 When other conquests he would gain.
No Welshman durst in battle ride,
Nor after sunset might abide .
Within fenced town or castle wall
Lest harm should life or limb befall.
In such base thralldom did he hold
The nations whom his power controlled.
Ye might have seen he'd gain by sleight
- 112 Whate'er he could not seize by might.
Had ye but thought what thralldom meant,

And how King Edward's soul was bent
On grasping all and giving nought,
Ye had not him as umpire sought,
But chosen yourselves a king, whose hand
Would right maintain throughout the land.
Why took ye not to heart the tales

- 120 Of all that was endured by Wales ?
Happy, a wise man said, are those
Who wisdom learn from others' woes,
For oft a peril reappears
That wrought men woe in bygone years.
Oh foolish folk to trust the word
Of monarch by ambition spurred !
Ye could not see what would betide,
128 For in this world that is so wide
Lives no one who can clearly see
What is hereafter doomed to be,
Since God on His almighty throne
Reserves unto himself alone
Foreknowledge of events that lie
In darkness of futurity.

The barons thus as I have said

- 136 Among themselves agreement made,
And with unanimous consent
Their message to King Edward sent,
Who in the Holy Land was then
Warring against the Saracen.
On hearing what they had to say
The English King made no delay,
But left the work he had in hand
144 And hurried back to his own land.
He then the Scottish barons told
That they should an assembly hold,
And he would speedily fulfil
All things according to their will.
He thought that in the verbal fray
His cunning mind would find a way
Through his great might to gain command,
152 As sovereign lord, of all the land.
Then to Sir Robert Bruce he said
" You shall be King of Scotland made,

If you will Scotland's kingdom own
To be a fief of England's throne."

"Sir," he replied, "so help me Heaven,
I want no realm by barter given,
But what may fall of right to me,
160 And, if God will it so to be,
My kingdom's right I will maintain,
As monarch, not as vassal thane,
And, like my ancestors of old,
The nation's liberty uphold."
Sir Edward loud in anger swore
That Robert Bruce need never more
Dream of the throne, and turned away.

168 John Baliol did not so gainsay
The English king, but, to his will
Submitting, wrought the land much ill.
He had reigned but a little while,
When through great subtlety and guile
For little reason or for none
Arrested and in prison thrown,
Degraded and deprived was he
176 Of honour and of dignity.
None but Almighty God may know
If he was justly treated so.

When mighty Edward with high hand
Had thus deported from the land
Sir John the Baliol, whom his frown
From throne to prison had cast down,
To Scotland he went speedily
184 The kingless realm to occupy,
And all the land fell in his power
With castle, city, town, and tower,
From where Wick, facing Orkney, lay
South to the Mull of Galloway.
Sheriffs and bailiffs made he then
And stuffed the land with Englishmen,
And officers of every kind,
192 To whom the rule of land's assigned,
From his own countrymen he drew,
Who presently so wicked grew,
With cruelty so deeply dyed,

- So full of avarice and pride,
That neither Scottish deeds nor words
Could satisfy those foreign lords.
The wives and daughters of the soil
200 They treated as their lawful spoil :
If any called such deed a crime,
His enemies would bide their time,
Till on some pretext false or true
They made their rash accuser rue.
If any Scotsman had him by
Possession that he valued high,
As horse or hound or other thing
208 That to his heart could solace bring,
Those thieves would have it right or wrong.
If he, to whom it did belong,
Denounced them, they contrived it so
That he should die or live in woe.
The English judges never cared
For justice nor a Scotsman spared.
Ah, no ! their judgments were not right,
216 For many a worthy Scottish knight
Was done to death without just cause
In bold defiance of all laws.
Alas that Scotsmen, once so free
And wont to live in liberty,
Should, by their folly or ill-fate,
Be subject to their foeman's hate,
Who on the seat of judgment sat !
224 Could there be evil worse than that ?
Oh, freedom is a glorious good !
The freeman does the thing he would ;
Freedom to all much solace gives ;
He lives at ease that freely lives.
A noble heart can have no ease,
Nor aught beside that may him please,
If freedom fail : no earthly bliss
232 Is more to be desired than this.
The man who always has been free
Can never know the misery,
The hate, the bitter sense of wrong,
That to the servile state belong.

- He who has groaned in thralldom sore,
Remembers all the ills he bore,
And would not barter freedom won
- 240 For all the gold beneath the sun.
From opposites contrasted so
We learn each opposite to know.
He that is doomed to be a thrall
Has nothing of his own at all ;
His lord and master has command
Of all that comes into his hand.
He cannot choose his life or do
- 248 Whate'er his nature draws him to,
And learned clerks when met together,
Are often found debating whether
A vassal, when his lord's command
Requires some service at his hand,
Should, if his wife at that time too
Demand some service as her due,
Let service of his master's rest
- 256 Till he performs his wife's behest.
Or leave awhile that debt unpaid
That so his lord may be obeyed.
I trust that wiser heads than mine
This tangled question may untwine.
But since comparison is made
And masters' claims may thus be weighed
Against the power of wedlock's band,
- 264 You easily may understand
How hard oppression's yoke must be,
For all but foolish men may see,
That wedlock is the hardest state
Of bondage man can tolerate.
And thralldom is far worse than death,
For, while a man draws vital breath,
It will him, bones and body, blast ;
- 272 But death's first visit is his last.
To put it shortly none can well
The woes of thralldom fully tell.
The English held in slavery
Both poor and men of high degree,
For of the barons some they slew

- And some they hanged and some they drew,
And some they put in prison strong,
280 Though they were guilty of no wrong.
Sir William Douglas was of those
Imprisoned by our haughty foes.
He fell, of Douglas Lord and Sire,
A martyr to the foemen's ire,
And, when he was in prison slain,
They gave his broad and fair domain
To Clifford's lord, before his son
288 His course of life had well begun ;
That son was then a little page,
But, when he was of riper age,
Well he avenged his father dead,
So that his name was heard with dread
Throughout all England. Many a foe
By his great prowess he laid low—
How many none alive can tell.
296 But wondrous hardships him befell
Before success his efforts crowned.
No enterprise was ever found
To daunt his courage or prevent
The carrying out of his intent.
Bold as he was, he always tried
To follow wisdom as his guide.
He knew the man was little good
304 Who had not fortune's frown withstood,
And that whoever passed his life
In labour hard and ceaseless strife,
Would so his worth and value double ;
Wherefore, he shunned not toil and trouble,
And all his life he played his part
In evil days with dauntless heart,
Taking whatever God might send,
312 And won his object in the end.
He (James of Douglas was his name),
When to his ears the tidings came
That wrongfully in prison fast
The English had his father cast,
And given his lands to Clifford's sway
Knew not what he should do or say.

- For money he had none to spend,
320 Nor had he any trusty friend,
To be to him a friend indeed
And willingly supply his need.
When thus bewildered in his mind,
He could not better counsel find
Then suddenly to cross the main
For refuge on the shores of Seine,
And there unknown in patience live,
328 Till God should some assistance give.
He would not then in Scotland stay
And soon to Paris went his way.
His days he passed full simply there,
And yet his heart was free from care.
As men of spirit often do,
He youthful follies would pursue,
And, meeting with companions low,
336 Learnt much that useful is to know.
Knowledge of high and low degree
In many ways may useful be,
A fact which Robert called the Good,
The Earl of Artois, understood,
Who vulgar dissipation feigned
And thereby much advantage gained,
For oft, as said in Cato's book,
344 'Tis wise to have a foolish look.
When he had stayed three years or less
In France, came tidings of distress
Across the sea. His sire was slain,
And he was plunged in grief again.
Then homewards he resolved to sail
To try what efforts might avail
To gain his heritage and free
352 His vassals from their slavery.
He landed at St. Andrews' quay.
The bishop, glad his face to see,
Gave him at board an honoured seat
And knives wherewith to carve the meat,
And found him goodly clothes to wear,
And in his palace lodging fair.
So he did with the bishop dwell

- 360 And all the people loved him well :
He showed himself, while he was there,
So courteous, wise, and debonair.
A bounteous, loving man was he,
And above all loved loyalty.
Loyalty is a precious good,
The loyal man lives as he should.
This virtue is of such great price,
368 That all alone it may suffice.
Disloyal men we do not prize,
However bold they be or wise.
Where'er this single virtue fails,
No other excellence avails
To make amends, nor any could
Without it bear the name of "good."
In all his actions he was true,
376 And thought foul scorn to have to do
With falsehood or with treacherous thought :
High honour was the end he sought,
Nobly he bore himself always,
And won from all beholders praise.
He was not fair ; without a lie
We cannot rate his beauty high.
In visage he was somewhat grey
384 And had black hair, as I heard say.
Clear signs of might could be descried
In his great limbs and shoulders wide.
His body was well made and spare,
As those that saw him did declare.
Meeting his friends with gladsome mind,
Gentle he was and meek and kind,
But to his foes on battle-field
392 A sterner countenance revealed.
He lisped a little, so they say,
But not in a displeasing way.
In him to Hector's self, I ween,
Some points of likeness might be seen,
For Hector had black hair like him,
A well-built frame and strength of limb,
And lisped a little as did he,
400 And was renowned for loyalty,

And both were courteous, bold, and wise.
But for great deeds of high emprise
No man has lived whom I should dare
With Trojan Hector to compare.
Yet Douglas also in his days
Was worthy of his meed of praise.

- In the same place he did abide,
408 Till Edward came in all his pride,
Surrounded by his barons bold,
In Stirling town his court to hold.
Full many a Scottish noble pressed
To meet the King and with the rest
Saint Andrews' bishop, who has ta'en
Squire James of Douglas in his train.
The bishop led him to the King
416 And said, "Sir, here to you I bring
This child, that claims your man to be,
Imploring you for charity
To take his homage and command
The restoration of his land."
"What land?" the angry King replied.
"Sir," said the bishop, "when he died,
His sire of Douglasdale was lord :
424 That is the land he'd have restored."
Burst forth the monarch's wrath amain,
He cried, "Sir bishop, it is plain
Thou wouldst break troth and be my foe,
Else couldst thou not have spoken so.
That young man's hostile sire defied
My power and in my prison died.
To plot high treason he did dare,
432 And therefore I should be his heir.
His son must elsewhere look for lands,
For Douglasdale's in other hands.
To Clifford they belong, for he
Has never swerved from loyalty."
The bishop, being answered so,
Could in his plea no further go,
But from the monarch's presence fled,
440 Whose wrath he had good cause to dread,
Nor dared his pleading to renew.

The King did what he had to do,
And then to England turned again
With mighty vassals in his train.

Gentles, I pray you, all give ear,
For our romance commences here,
A tale of men in dire distress,

448 Who did great deeds of hardiness,
Before their object they achieved.
These men such grace from God received,
That afterwards by wondrous might
They raised themselves to greatest height
Of fair renown, although their foes
So many were, that there arose
Ever a thousand against one :

456 But by God's help are battles won.
Nay once or twice, this is no lie,
Even greater odds they did defy.
But God, who greatest is of might,
Protected them by his foresight,
That they might free from cruel yoke
The simple harmless Scottish folk,
And wreak His vengeance on the strong

464 Who had afflicted them so long.
Like them the Maccabees of old,
Of whom we're in the Bible told,
With honour dared their swords to wield
On many a hard fought battle-field,
To save their sacred fatherland
Afflicted by the heavy hand
Of those, who them and theirs had held

472 In bondage : boldly they rebelled,
And, though but few, so runs the story,
From conquered Kings they won great glory,
And set their land from bondage free,
For which their fame shall deathless be.

When Bruce of whom I spoke before,
Saw ruin spreading more and more,
His soul with grief was sore distressed

480 To see the people so oppressed.
The pity in his breast concealed
Was never on his face revealed,

- Till once it happened on a day,
As they from Stirling rode away,
Sir John the Comyn said, "Do you
This evil-governed country view?
Those English tyrants murder folk
488 Unjustly held beneath their yoke.
By right you should our monarch be,
And, if you put your trust in me,
You shall be King of all the land,
And I'll lend you a helping hand,
While you on your part must agree
To give me all your lands in fee.
But, if this honour you disclaim
496 And royal power is not your aim,
Then, taking all the lands I own,
Help *me* to mount the Scottish throne,
That Scotsmen freedom may enjoy :
For there is neither man nor boy
In all the country, but is fain
To win his freedom back again."
When Bruce had heard his speech right through,
504 He thought his kinsman would prove true ;
With the proposal well contented,
He gladly to the terms assented,
And said " Since you will have it so,
The Scottish throne I'll not forego.
Of right it does to me belong,
And right can make the feeble strong."
Thus those two barons were agreed,
512 And on that night they signed a deed,
And swore great oaths never to break
The treaty that they then did make.
Of all things to be most abhorred
Is treason, for nor duke nor lord,
Nor prince nor king, however great
In wisdom, power, and royal state,
Though far and wide he win renown,
520 Can ward off treason from his crown.
'Twas treason breached the Trojan wall,
Which ten long years refused to fall,
When many thousand had been slain

- Of the besiegers all in vain,
As Dictys who knew well their state
And Phrygian Dares does relate :
They could not be subdued by might,
528 But victims fell to treason's sleight.
Great Alexander by his power
O'erthrew the Babylonian tower
And for twelve years his legions hurled
Triumphant o'er the prostrate world,
In his own house to meet his fate—
The poison bowl of treacherous hate.
Pity that such a man so died !
536 But first his realm he did divide.
Great Julius too, who did advance
To Britain over conquered France
Who conquered Europe, Africa,
Arabia and Syria,
And won as his reward at home
The sceptre of imperial Rome,
This first of Roman Emperors,
544 Was killed by privy councillors,
Who with their daggers stabbed him dead.
When he perceived that he was sped,
With his own hand he closed his eyes
To meet his death in seemly wise.
King Arthur by his chivalry
For Britain won the sovereignty
Of kingdoms twelve that he subdued,
552 And, like a man of generous mood,
The realm of France by war unchained.
The Emperor, at Rome who reigned,
Iberian Lucius, he o'erthrew :
And yet, for all he dared to do,
He and his followers many a one
By Modred, his own sister's son,
Were done to death, as we are told
560 In chronicles of Britons old.

Such was the outcome of this pact :
The Comyn went to tell the fact
To Edward and perhaps conveyed
More than was really done and said.

- When Edward the sealed packet got,
No doubt remained about the plot.
By which the Comyn's doom was sealed,
568 A doom that could not be repealed.
As the King read the compact through,
Into a boundless rage he flew,
And swore that he would vengeance dire
Exact from Bruce, who dared conspire
To break the peace and draw the sword
As traitor to his sovereign lord,
And to the Comyn then he said
• 576 *His* loyalty should be repaid,
And that in the most ample measure.
The Comyn humbly breathed his pleasure,
Thinking he now would gain command
Of all with no one to withstand,
When Bruce was dead. Such was his thought :
But the fool's counsel comes to nought,
Even what wiser men intend
584 Does not come always to the end
They in their wisdom hoped to see ;
For God alone knows what shall be.
Of Comyn's plotting it befell,
As I shall later have to tell.
- When Comyn started for the north,
King Edward messengers sent forth
In haste the Parliament to call.
592 To London town he summoned all
His barons for this Parliament,
And specially to Bruce he sent,
And bade him with the rest appear.
The Bruce, who entertained no fear
Of treachery or falsehood hidden,
To London rode as he was bidden.
Arrived in London, for one day
600 He in his lodgings chose to stay,
And on the morrow forth he went,
To take his seat in Parliament.
By the King's order he was sought,
And to the privy council brought,
And when the contract had been read,

- He saw his life hung on a thread,
But was not destined then to die,
608 For mighty God who rules on high
Would him for higher honour save.
King Edward the signed packet gave
To Bruce, and, asking him to view
The seal, said, " Was this sealed by you ? "
Then, fixing on the seal his eyes,
Bruce answered him in humble guise,
And said, " A simpleton I feel,
616 Because I have not here my seal.
Another carries it for me,
And, therefore, if you will agree,
Allow me respite for a while
To scan this letter and its style.
I only ask a single day.
To-morrow without more delay,
Soon as the council meets, I'll place
624 The document before your grace.
As surety for my truth I pledge
My lands and all my heritage."
Edward thought Bruce could not refuse
To come for fear his land he'd lose ;
So let him go, and thought he would
630 The next day make his promise good.

Book II.

- Bruce to his lodgings went anon.
The little respite he had won,
You may be certain made him glad.
His steward instantly he bade
Provide his men in every way
Their entertainment for the day.
Himself would in his chamber be
- 8 A long while in strict privacy
Attended by his clerk alone.
As soon as e'er the steward had gone
To carry out his lord's behest,
The Bruce without a moment's rest,
Keeping his foemen in the dark,
Mounted on horseback with his clerk.
He rode by night, he rode by day,
- 16 Halting but little on the way,
Until, ere fifteen days were passed,
They saw Lochmaben's walls at last.
His brother Edward there they found,
Who viewed with wonder, I'll be bound,
This journey hasty and concealed.
The Bruce to him the cause revealed,
How, to escape King Edward's might,
- 24 He had resolved on sudden flight.
Now, as it happened, on that day
The Comyn was not far away :
'Twas at Dumfries he then abode.
The Bruce took horse and thither rode,
Firmly resolved to pay him well
For that which he had dared to tell.
From his resolve he did not falter :
- 32 Confronting Comyn at the altar
Of Gray Friars' Church with laughing face
He showed him in that holy place
The fatal pact, and with a knife
Stabbed him and took away his life.

- Sir Edmund Comyn also died,
And many mighty men beside.
However there are some who say
40 This happened in another way ;
But, whatsoever caused the strife,
Thereby the Comyn lost his life,
And Bruce did evil to defy
The holy altar's sanctity,
For which such troubles him befell,
That no romance did ever tell
Of man that was so sore distressed
48 And was at last by fortune blessed.
- Now going back I must relate
How England's monarch sat in state
With all his peers in Parliament,
And for the Bruce a summons sent.
Knights, who the royal mandate bore,
Appear before the Bruce's door,
But call in vain. The servants say
56 That by command since yesterday
In his own room their lord had been
By all except his clerk unseen.
When, after knocking long in vain,
They found they could no answer gain,
They broke the door, but, though they sought
All through the room, discovered nought.
So they returned and told the King,
64 Why they had failed the Bruce to bring.
At his escape the King grieved sore,
And, filled with wrath, he stoutly swore,
That Bruce both hanged and drawn should be.
He swore with confidence ; but he,
The Bruce, hoped it might not be so,
And when, as ye already know,
In church he had the Comyn slain,
72 He to his castle went again.
- Thence sent he messengers to ride
And carry letters far and wide
Bidding his friends come to his aid
And join the force he had arrayed ,
For he now purposed to be crowned.

- Meantime through all the country round
The news of Comyn's death had spread.
- 80 One horseman with a letter sped
To let St. Andrews' bishop know
That Sir John Comyn was laid low.
Its contents known, the Bishop then
Read out the letter to his men,
And said to them, "I hope to see
In Bruce fulfilled a prophecy,
That once was by the Rhymer given
- 88 Of Ercildoune. So help me heaven,
I have great hopes he shall as King
Beneath his rule all Scotland bring."
- Young James of Douglas, unrestored,
Still carving at the Bishop's board,
Had heard him all the letter read,
And with attentive mind took heed
Of every word the Bishop said.
- 96 Soon as the table boards are laid
Aside, they hastily repair
To private room. In secret there
James Douglas said, "Sir, it is plain
How Englishmen through might and main
Have dispossessed me of my land,
And now you're given to understand,
The Earl of Carrick claims the throne
- 104 Of Scotland as by right his own.
Since he has put to death that man,
He lies beneath the English ban.
Him they would dispossess as well
As me : I fain with him would dwell ;
And so, sir, if it be your will,
I stand by him for good or ill.
Through him I hope my land to win
- 112 Spite of the Clifford and his kin."
- The Bishop heard him till he'd done
And moved with pity, said, "Sweet son,
I'd gladly see thee there, God knows :
But, for I fear my watchful foes,
Manage the matter thus, I pray ;
My palfrey Ferrand take away :

- Through the whole kingdom far and wide,
120 Thou wilt not find such horse to ride.
So act that none may think thou went
To take him off with my consent.
Let not the groom thy will withstand,
But make him yield to thy demand.
Thus all suspicion I evade.
And now may God Almighty aid,
That thou and he thou hastenest to
128 May in the dangers ye pass through
Yourselves against your foes defend.”
He gave him silver coin to spend
And kindly bidding him good day,
Sent him with blessings on his way,
Saying he would not soon declare
His flight. James Douglas left him there,
And, as directed, went his way
136 To where the horses’ stable lay.
The angry groom his path withstood,
But Douglas in his angry mood
With heavy sword-dint laid him low,
And then I ween he was not slow
To put the saddle on the steed,
Leap on his back, and, as agreed,
Press forward without taking leave.
144 May God him into grace receive,
Save him and shield him from his foes !
Towards Lochmaben town he goes
Along the southern road alone
Until he comes near Arickstone.
’Twas there at last the Douglas found
Robert the Bruce who then was bound
With all his following for Scone
152 To take his seat upon the throne.
The Douglas, when he saw him there,
Rode up and gave him greeting fair.
Then who he was went on to tell,
And all the woes that him befell :
How Clifford held his lands and how
He wished his fealty to vow
To Bruce as to his lawful king,

- 160 And was resolved in every thing
To share with him both good and ill.
Soon as the Bruce had heard his will,
Of such a liegeman glad indeed,
He gave him arms and men to lead,
Sure he would prove a warrior bold,
Such as his forebears were of old.
And thus was founded then and there
- 168 Friendship no trials could impair :
As long as ever either drew
The breath of life, it stronger grew.
The vassal swerved not from the word
He'd sworn unto his sovereign lord,
Who in his turn with guerdon free
Repaid his vassal's loyalty.
- The Lord de Bruce to Glasgow bound
- 176 Sent out to all the country round,
Calling his followers to his side,
A great array, with him to ride
To Scone, where he was crowned in haste
And on the throne of Scotland placed,
As was the practice in that day.
But in this place I shall not say
Aught of the pomp and circumstance
- 184 Prescribed by ancient ordinance,
Or of the lords there, save that they
All to King Robert homage pay.
From Scone he travelled near and far
To seek friends for the coming war.
He knew his work was scarce begun
And that, before his realm was won,
He must contend in stubborn fight,
- 192 Against the King of England's might,
One who in fell and ruthless rage
Excelled all living in that age.

When to King Edward it was told
How that the Bruce, who was so bold,
First struck Sir John the Comyn dead,
Then had the crown placed on his head,
A furious fit of rage came o'er him ;

200 He summoned to appear before him

- Aymer de Valence, a good knight,
A man of wisdom and of might,
And bade him at the utmost speed
An army into Scotland lead,
And burn and slay and ravage there.
Then as reward to whosoe'er
Should capture Bruce or take his life
- 208 He promised all the land of Fife.
Sir Aymer did as Edward bade,
And famous knights with him he had.
Sir Philip Mowbray and the skill
Of Ingram knight of Umfraville,
Who was the soul of chivalry,
Both followed in his company.
Of Scottish warriors half or more
- 216 Under his banner armour bore,
For the most part of Scottish lands
Was held as yet in English hands.
To Perth the Bruce went with his rout
That was defended round about
By many towers embattled high
Assault of foeman to defy.
Therein Sir Aymer sojourned then
- 224 Surrounded by his mighty men.
King Robert knew that he was there,
And all the chiefs who with him were.
On his side too assembled stood
For battle many warriors good.
But still their foes were more than they
By fifteen hundred, I heard say.
Yet he had in that hour of need
- 232 Many that doughty were indeed,
And barons bold as boars were there.
And two earls also with him were,
Lennox and Athole ; there too came
Sir Edward Bruce ; I next must name
Sir Thomas Randolph, De la Haye,
And good Sir David de Barclay,
Fraser, Inchmartin, Somerville :
- 240 Young Douglas, too, was with him still,
Who then was but of little might,

- And other warriors staunch in fight.
Christopher Seton also came
And Robert Boyd well known to fame,
And other valiant men as well,
Many whose names I cannot tell.
Though few in number, they were leal
- 248 And full of chivalry and zeal,
Who ranged themselves in war array
Before the walls of Perth that day,
And called Sir Aymer forth to fight.
He fully trusting in the might
Of those he led, without delay
Bade them get ready for the fray.
But Ingram, knight of Umfraville,
- 256 Was much afraid they might fare ill,
If onslaught recklessly they made
Upon a foe so well arrayed,
And to Sir Aymer thus he said,
“ Sir, if you will by me be led,
Do not join battle with the foe,
While they make such a gallant show.
The leader who those men commands
- 264 Is wise and valiant of his hands,
And he has warriors not a few
Beneath his banner staunch and true.
If now against them we advance,
There is great danger of mischance :
Just now to put that force to flight
Would need an army of great might.
When good arrangement has been made
- 272 And men for battle are arrayed,
If only they be good men too,
They all know what they have to do,
And are more dangerous far than they
Who come to fight in no array.
Therefore you may, sir, let them know,
That this night only they may go
Back to their camp and take their ease,
- 280 And on the morrow, if they please,
You will come forth them to assail,
Unless their courage meantime fail.

So to their quarters they will go,
And some will wander to and fro,
While those who in the camp remain,
Tired out with marching, will be fain
To lay their arms aside and rest.

288 Then we in what array seems best,
Advancing on them valiantly,
Shall charge with all our chivalry,
And they who hoped to rest all night,
When they see us arrayed for fight
Coming upon them unawares,
Will be distraught with sudden scares.
Ere they can form in battle line,

296 Let us with speed our troops combine
And near their camp in arms assemble.
Most men, you know, are apt to tremble,
When this way suddenly surprised,
Though valiant if before advised.”
With his suggestion they complied,
And told their foes arrayed outside
To go and rest them for that night

304 And on the morrow come to fight.
So Bruce’s men, seeing that day
No chance of fighting, went away
Back to their camp in Methven wood.
One third go foraging for food,
Their armour all the rest unbind
And rest where’er they shelter find.

Sir Aymer, without long delay

312 His troops in order to array,
Came out at once with all his force,
Directing their impetuous course
At headlong speed to Methven straight.
The Bruce, who had his armour’s weight
Thrown off, now saw the foe appear
And cried aloud for all to hear

“To arms, to arms! The foe advance.

320 Make haste. Get ready sword and lance.”
His followers to his words gave heed,
And on their saddles leapt with speed.
When Bruce his standard had unwound,

- And all his men were gathered round,
He said, "Sirs, now ye well may see,
Those English folk by subtlety
Have plotted to perform by sleight
328 That which they cannot do by might.
Who trusts his foe, it is too true,
Will soon or late his folly rue.
Nevertheless, in spite of odds,
The gift of victory is God's.
We know that numbers often fail
In battle conflict to prevail,
And few may many overpower,
336 As we may do this very hour.
Active and valiant are ye all,
Prompt to respond to Honour's call,
And fired by knighthood's noble flame.
If ye would win immortal fame,
Acquit yourselves like men to-day.
But one word more I have to say,
That he who for his country dies
344 Will find a home in Paradise."
He scarce had finished this address,
When close on them the foemen press,
Arrayed for fight in skilful wise,
And bent on deeds of high emprise.
Thus either force in brave array
Assembled ready for the fray.
They couch their spears on either side,
352 And with such force encountering ride,
That lances into splinters fly
And many sorely wounded die.
Blood flowed from many a noble breast,
Because the worthiest and the best,
In hope to win a glorious name,
Eagerly to close quarters came,
And dealt full many a deadly blow.
360 Soon many valiant knights laid low
Were rolling on the blood-stained sod
And on them trampling horses trod,
Some wounded, some already dead ;
The blood-stained grass became all red.

- The knights who are not cast to ground
With sword and mace their foemen pound,
And such fell strokes they give and take
368 That all around shrink back and quake.
The Bruce's men with valiant hearts
In that hard fight played well their parts,
And Bruce himself before the rest
Against the foemen onward pressed,
Driving them back by might and main.
His followers every muscle strain
To stem the foe's o'erpowering might,
376 Who, still prevailing in the fight,
Are ever forward making way
And now have nearly won the day.
When thus his folk began to tire,
The King, o'ercome by grief and ire,
Shouting his battle-cry aloud,
Rushed fiercely at the hostile crowd,
So fiercely that for fear they shook.
384 He cut down all he overtook,
While he had strength to strike a stroke,
And called upon his flagging folk
"Come on ! Come on ! They're failing fast,
This battle cannot longer last."
While speaking thus, the Bruce was still
Dealing his blows with such good will,
That, had you seen him in that fight,
392 You had him called a doughty knight.
But stout and valiant as was he
And others of his company,
No valour could that day avail,
When weaker spirits gan to fail,
And basely safety seek in flight.
But every good and noble knight,
Whose soul was warmed with anger's flame,
400 Abode and won immortal fame.
When to Sir Aymer it was known
Bruce and his captains stood alone,
And that so few remained to fight,
He gathered round him many a knight,
And, forming them in close array,

- Charged to the thickest of the fray
So fiercely that his foes were shaken.
- 408 Sir Thomas Randolph there was taken,
Then a young knight to battle new,
Sir Alexander Fraser, too,
Also Sir David de Barclay,
Inchmartin and Hugh de la Haye,
And Somerville and others more.
King Robert, too, himself was sore
Bestead and into peril brought,
- 416 When Philip Mowbray came and caught
His bridle rein and loud did cry
To all his friends who might be nigh,
“ Help ! help ! I have the new-made King.”
His shout did to the rescue bring
Chrystal of Seton’s ready sword,
Who saw the danger of his lord
And charging forward struck the foe,
- 424 Sir Philip Mowbray, such a blow,
That mighty as he was he reeled
And would have fallen on the field,
Had he not held on to his horse
And Bruce’s bridle dropped perforce.
The Bruce once more his war-shout cried,
And called his followers to his side,
Who were so few their failing might
- 432 No longer could maintain the fight.
They rode away from out the press,
Whereon the King, in great distress
To see his men from battle go,
Exclaimed, “ Fair sirs, since it is so,
Since Fortune seems this day to lour,
Let us withdraw beyond their power,
Till such time as God shows us grace,
- 440 And even to-day, should they give chase,
We might perhaps our debt repay.”
His words none cared to disobey ;
So they, too, with the others went.
The enemy with war toil spent
We requite unable to pursue,
And with their prisoners withdrew.

Gladly to Perth they took their way

448 Rejoicing greatly in their prey.
That night all slept within the town,
For none was of so great renown,
Nor yet so daring of them all,
As to abide outside the wall ;
So much they feared the night might bring
A visit from the doughty King.
To England soon they sent to tell

456 All that in Methven wood befell.
The English King was very glad,
And in his cruel anger bade
The captives to be hanged each one ;
Sir Aymer would not have this done.
Some of them life and land receive ;
But they must Bruce's service leave,
And from King Edward holding land
464 Obey as vassals his command,
And war against the Bruce as foes.
Sir Thomas Randolph was of those,
Who swore to be King Edward's men.
Of others who were taken then,
They ransomed some and some they slew,
And some they hanged and some they drew.

When Bruce had thus the battle lost,

472 His soul with woe was tempest tossed,
Sad for his friends in bonds or slain,
His mind oppressed by wildering pain,
Because on none he could rely
Outside of his own company,
A scanty band ; they scarce were more,
All told, than five and twenty score.

His brother never left his side,
480 Sir Edward Bruce in battle tried,
And with him was a baron famed
Sir William Haliburton named,
The Earl of Athole, too, was there ;
But ever since they worsted were,
The Earl of Lennox was away
Exposed to peril many a day
Ere he again of Bruce had sight,

- 488 Though ever as a valiant knight
He bore himself full manfully.
The King had in his company
Young James of Douglas, young in age,
But active, bold, in council sage ;
Sir Gilbert de la Hay as well,
And Neil the Campbell I can tell,
But all their names I cannot say,
- 496 Who went as outlaws many a day ;
On the bare mountains they would dine
On hunter's fare uncheered by wine.
Down to the plains Bruce did not dare
Descend, because the commons were
Faithless and for their lives full fain
To seek the English peace again.
And thus, I ween, it happens aye :
- 504 None on the commons may rely
Who cannot their protector be.
So they deserted Bruce. As he
Could not for their defence provide,
They went and joined the other side ;
But in their hearts they wished him speed,
That they might be from thralldom freed.
Thus on the mountains lived the Bruce ;
- 512 His followers' clothes with constant use
Were torn to tatters ; shoes they made
Of hides of beasts that they waylaid.
Therefore they went to Aberdeen,
Where Nigel Bruce came with the Queen
And other noble wives and fair
With loving hearts assembled there.
Those wives so loyal were that they
- 520 To ease and safety far away
Preferred by their dear husbands' side
To face whatever might betide ;
For love can by its wondrous might
Make suffering and pain seem light.
It nerves with strength the feeble arm
And frees the timid from alarm,
So that good wives no suffering shun
- 528 And into any peril run

Gladly, if all that they endure
Their husbands' welfare may secure.

When that great city Thebes was ta'en
And King Adrastus' men were slain,
Who came the country to invade,
The women of his land, 'tis said,
Went to convoy him home again

536 When they heard all his folk were slain.

'Twas then that King Campanëus
Besought help of Menestëus,
Who, as he chanced to ride thereby
With hundreds three in company,
Thebes at the King's request assailed,
Who yet to take the town had failed.
Then did those women pierce the wall

544 With pikes, where the assailants all
Found entrance and the tower destroyed
And made the crowded town a void.
But when the Duke was gone, and dead
Were all those whom the King had led,
The women took him home again
Though all the men but he were slain.

To men oppressed with toil and grief

552 Women bring solace and relief,
And so it gave the King new life
To see again his loving wife.
But still by day his rest he took,
By night he kept a sharp outlook.
A good while there he sojourned then
To rest his weary way-worn men,
Until at last the English foe

560 The place of hiding came to know,
Where they lived free from toil and care.
The English then a host prepare
And hope they may the Bruce surprise.
But he, who was in action wise,
Knew they assembled were and where,
And knowing they too many were
For him in open field to face,

568 He bade his men prepare apace
Out of their resting-place to ride ;

The ladies rode out by his side.

- Thus to the mountains they repair,
Where very meagre is their fare,
But worthy James of Douglas wrought
With might and main, and ever sought
In various ways as he was able
576 To get meat for the ladies' table.
Sometimes the flesh of deer he brought
Salmon sometimes and pike he caught
With nets and in the streams about
He fished for minnows, eels, and trout,
And sometimes they obtained supplies
By raids upon their enemies.
Each did his utmost, as was meet,
584 To get the ladies food to eat,
But of all those assembled there
In this work no one could compare
With James of Douglas, who ne'er tired
In getting all the dames required.
His zeal, address, and ready thought
To the King's soul much comfort brought.
So faring thus they went their way
592 Until they reached the head of Tay

Book III.

The Lord of Lorn, who dwelt thereby,
Was Bruce's deadly enemy,
And ever for his uncle's sake,
Sir John the Comyn, thought to take
Dire vengeance. When he came to hear
That Bruce had pitched his camp so near,
In haste he summoned forth his clan

- 8 And from Argyleshire many a man
Beneath his banner weapons bore :
They were a thousand men or more.

The King whom they would have surprised
Was of their coming well advised,
And, though outnumbered, made a stand
Against them with his little band.
Many, when first they came to blows,

- 16 Were struck to earth and never rose.
King Robert's folk full well them bore,
And slew and felled and wounded sore.
But those upon the other side,
Who fought on foot, their axes plied :
Some steeds with ghastly wounds were maimed
And some were killed and some were lamed.
Douglas was wounded on that day,
24 And also Gilbert de la Hay.

When to King Robert it was clear
His men were giving ground through fear,
He shouted loud his battle cry
And charged into the enemy.

- Before his vigorous attack
Some fell and all were driven back,
But, since so many were the foes
32 Whose axes dealt such ghastly blows,
Fearing the danger to his folk,
He called them round, and thus he spoke,
"Methinks it would be folly sheer
In such a strife to persevere,

- For many horses they have slain,
And, if we longer here remain,
We may reduce our company
40 And ourself will in peril be.
Therefore, 'twere better back to go,
Turning our faces to the foe :
The stronghold of our camp is nigh,
Where we may all their spite defy.”
Then from the battle they withdrew
Steadily, not as cowards do,
But in a solid body massed,
48 And their good King retired the last,
That so he might defend his band ;
Often he made a valiant stand,
Driving the fierce pursuers back,
So that they shrank from his attack :
The boldest would not far advance.
For much they feared his sword and lance.
So well he did defend his men,
56 That whosoe'er had seen him then
In the retreat such prowess show
And turn so often on the foe,
Might freely own that Bruce's worth
Deserved the highest throne on earth.
The Lord of Lorn with anger saw
Many of one stand in such awe,
That they would fain their steps retrace
64 And shrank from following up the chase.
Surprised to see that all his horde
Were daunted by a single sword,
He said, addressing Murdoch's son,
“ What Bruce to save his men has done
May rival Gaul MacMorna's might,
When Fingal put his men to flight.”
A nobler likeness one might find,
72 For Bruce's valour brings to mind,
How Gaudifer, Lord of Larÿs,
Together with the Duke Betÿs,
Attacks upon the spoilers made,
Whom Alexander came to aid,
And how Duke Betÿs took to flight,

- And would no more maintain the fight,
But that good knight, Sir Gaudifer,
80 With valiant heart resolved to bear
The brunt of the pursuers' glaive
So that he might his followers save.
Great Alexander he laid low
And general Tholimar also,
Danklyne as well to earth he bore,
Good Conéus and many more,
But in the end himself was killed.
- 88 The likeness thus was not fulfilled,
For Bruce with noble chivalry
Defended all his company,
And through the greatest danger passed
But safe and sound escaped at last.
There were two brothers in those lands,
Famed as the stoutest of their hands
Of all men in the country round :
- 96 They swore where'er the Bruce they found
They would despatch him there and then,
Or never more be living men.
These two strong brothers bore the name
Of Makindrosser, just the same
In meaning as the English word
"Door-keeper," and they had a third
To help, a knave of ruffian mien ;
- 104 They, when our noble King was seen,
Riding behind his company,
Oft turning on the enemy,
Cunningly thought it best to wait
Till he was in a pathway strait
Betwixt the loch-side and a brae.
Indeed, so narrow was the way,
He scarce had room to turn his steed.
- 112 Rushing upon him at full speed,
One boldly caught his bridle rein :
Bruce, striking him with might and main,
His right arm from the shoulder severed,
The while the second man endeavoured
To hold him by the leg and shoot
His hand 'twixt stirrup-strap and foot.

- The King, when there he felt a hand,
120 High in his stirrups took firm stand,
And drove his spurs into his horse,
Which bounded forward with such force,
That the assailant fell, but still
His hand in spite of his own will
Was held within the stirrup fast.
Then in great haste the third and last
Of the three ruffians from the brae
128 That rose on one side of the way
Sprang on the croupe of Bruce's steed,
Who then was brought to direst need,
Yet, trained in hard experience' school
In every peril to be cool,
Performed a deed of matchless might,
Pulled from behind into his sight
By strength of arm his struggling foe,
136 And laid him on the saddlebow,
And with his sword dealt such a stroke,
That the man's skull he fairly broke.
The blood gushed from the cloven head,
And on the ground the man fell dead.
Then in great haste the doughty King
Gave his good sword a downward swing,
And him, whom still he onward drew
144 Caught in his stirrup, last he slew.
Thus Bruce by strength of heart and hand
Wholly destroyed this evil band.
When thus the men of Lorn beheld,
How Bruce these three assailants quelled,
Protected by his own right arm,
So great was all the host's alarm,
That no one dared of all his foes
152 With such a champion to change blows.
Of those who to Lorn's banner came
A baron bold, who bore the name
Macnaughton, looked on Bruce's deed
As worthy honour's highest meed.
And to the Lord of Lorn said he
"Now of a surety you may see
The most redoubted champion

- 160 That ever you set eyes upon.
 For by his doughty deed that knight,
 And by his manhood's wondrous might
 Has very speedily despatched
 Three men not easy to be matched,
 And all our army daunted so,
 That no man dare against him go.
 How oft he turns his horse's head,
- 168 And shows of us he has no dread ! ”
 Said Lorn, “ It seems to give you joy,
 That he should thus our men destroy.”
 “ No,” said Macnaughton, in reply,
 “ So help me God, who rules on high,
 Saving your presence, 'tis not so :
 But, whether he be friend or foe
 That proves himself a worthy knight,
- 176 To grudge him honour is not right,
 And of a truth in all my time
 I never heard in song or rime
 Of one who with more gallant heart
 In battle played a knightly part.”
 So spake they of King Robert then
 Who presently rejoined his men,
 And to a safe retreat them led
- 184 Where they no more their foes need dread,
 And likewise Lorn withdrew his host
 Lamenting for the men he lost.
 The King his watches set, and bade
 His comrades eat what food they had,
 And not to be of doleful mood,
 But make as merry as they could,
 “ Since nothing on the earth,” said he,
- 192 “ Than doleful brooding worse can be,
 For those who yield to anxious care
 Fall often into black despair,
 And, if to dark despair you yield,
 You'll conquer in no battlefield,
 For when the heart's in sorry plight,
 The body is not worth a mite.
 Therefore above all else take care
- 200 Ye never yield to black despair.

- Although we now may suffer woe,
God will not have it always so.
Hard is our lot, but I have read
Of others harder still bestead,
Who by God's grace, ere all was done,
Achievement of their purpose won.
Rome was reduced to evil plight
208 By Hannibal's victorious might.
From fingers of her knighthood slain
So many jewelled rings were ta'en,
That of them bushels three he sent
To Carthage. Then to Rome he went
There to destroy the city wall.
The men within both great and small
Had hasted from the town to go,
216 Were it not for King Scipio,
Who, ere they fled, would all have slain.
He forced them to turn back again.
Then to defend the city wall
Freedom he gave to every thrall,
And of them all he knights did make
And from the temple walls did take
Arms that for victories bygone
224 As votive offerings hung thereon.
I trow those stalwart thralls were glad
To find themselves in armour clad,
And, seeing they were disenslaved,
Like valiant freemen they behaved,
Resolving to defend the town,
And all together they went down
Into the open field to fight
232 Where Hannibal with all his might
Arrayed in battle order stood.
But God in heaven to them was good,
And sent such heavy showers of rain
That none could in the field remain.
The armed men on either side
Were driven from the storm to hide,
These to their tents and those of Rome
240 To shelter of their hearth and home.
Thus war was hindered by the rain,

- And thus it happened twice again.
 When Hannibal this wonder saw,
 He thought it better to withdraw
 With all his mighty war array
 To be upon a later day
 Engaged with Rome in hopeless strife
 248 And lose his native land and life.
 When ye consider how those few
 The mighty Hannibal o'erthrew,
 Learn by their brave example ne'er
 To be disheartened and despair.
 Let none be utterly cast down,
 However fortune seem to frown,
 For none can know in how short space
 256 God may restore them to his grace.
 Had these men fled and gone their way,
 The town had been their foemen's prey.
 He who takes part in war's great game
 Should make it evermore his aim
 To meet his adversary's might
 Sometimes by force, sometimes by sleight,
 Nor e'er sight of his object lose,
 264 And, if he ever have to choose,
 Should rather die in noble strife
 Than save by cowardice his life."
 Thus the King tried his men to cheer
 268 And many a story did they hear
 Him tell of men in bygone days
 Brought low by fate in various ways,
 Who safe through many trials passed
 And gained their purpose at the last.
 Therefore he said that those who would
 Maintain their courage unsubdued,
 Must struggle on and never tire
 276 In working out their heart's desire,
 As Julius Caesar long ago
 All rest from labour would forego,
 Pursuing still with might and main
 The end he purposed to attain,
 And thinking nothing was attained,
 While anything undone remained.

- So he accomplished mighty deeds,
284 As in his history one reads.
We may by his example know,
And reason also tells us so,
That whoso serious purpose frames
And earnestly pursues his aims,
Not faintly nor with reckless thought,
Nor seeking what were best unsought,
Must certainly in part succeed,
292 Or else he is unblest indeed ;
And with long life it well may fall,
That he achieve his objects all,
Therefore we must despair eschew,
And fearlessly high aims pursue,
For, should our efforts not avail,
'Tis through ourselves we mostly fail.
By words like these the King maintained
300 His followers' courage, though he feigned
More comfort than he could have had,
When fortune went to worse from bad.
Now with continual toil outworn
And suffering hardly to be borne
The ladies' hearts began to groan ;
And not the ladies' hearts alone :
Earl John of Athole was of those,
308 Who, when they saw that twice his foes
Had managed to give Bruce the foil,
And how they lived in fear and toil,
Their foes increasing every day,
Felt all their courage ebb away.
He pleading for his words excuse
Once spoke as follows to the Bruce :—
“ Always we live in so great need,
316 Never from toil and danger freed,
And suffering miseries untold
From hunger, sleepless nights, and cold,
That, if I do not soon withdraw,
My life is hardly worth a straw.
Worn out with hardship and with strife,
Even though the change should cost my life,
I must seek some abiding place.

- 324 So let me go. Do me this grace.”
The King saw that he was depressed
And broken down and needed rest.
He said, “ Sir Earl, we soon shall see
And settle how it best may be.
I pray that whereso’er you go
God may protect you from the foe.”
Then Bruce the captains called aside,
- 332 On whose advice he most relied.
Of all the plans they could devise
Among them, it appeared most wise
To let the Earl of Athole go,
The ladies and the Queen also
With Nigel Bruce, and that they all
Behind Kildrummy’s castle wall
Might rest and shelter find for long,
- 340 Because that castle was so strong,
They thought it would be hard to win,
While food and victuals were within.
So it was done even as they planned :
The Queen with all the female band
Mounted on horseback forth to fare,
And you had seen, had you been there,
How taking leave ’mid doubts and fears
- 348 The ladies’ cheeks were wet with tears,
And how the knights too said good-bye
With many a loving tear and sigh
And kissed their loves : then deeply moved
The Bruce’s kindness was proved.
No more on horseback would he go
But would on foot face weal or woe,
And, that no lady who had need
- 356 Might have to go without a steed,
He let no horses with him stay,
But with the Queen sent all away.
The castle for which they were bound
They safely reached and welcome found.
Though comforted with meat and drink,
They could not but with sorrow think,
How hardly pressed the King was then,
- 364 Who only had two hundred men.

Yet still he tried their hearts to cheer :
May God Almighty hold him dear !

- When thus the Queen had gone away
The King and all his small array,
Who scarce amounted to ten score,
Among the hills much suffering bore.
Having no horses now to ride,
372 On foot they trod the mountain-side.
By this they felt the winter's cold
Approaching, and their foes more bold
Now pressed them hard on every side.
How sore their fortitude was tried
By hunger, rain, and sleet, and snow,
There is no living man can know.
The King knew well their sorry case
380 And all the ills they had to face.
Since winter now was drawing near,
The cold increasing made him fear
To let his men lie on the hills
Sleepless exposed to nightly chills,
And so he thought it would be best
To go to Cantyre and take rest
Until the winter passed away,
388 And after that, without delay,
Upon the mainland to descend
And follow fortune to the end.

- But since Cantyre lies in the sea,
He sent Neil Campbell on that he
Might boats and food enough purvey,
And fixed upon a certain day
When he should meet him at the sea.
396 Sir Neil went with his company,
Losing no time upon his way :
His brother with the King did stay.
With such address his part he played,
That in a fortnight he purveyed
Shipping enough and store of food :
So well his work he understood.
Men of his race who lived thereby
404 Gave him their aid right willingly.
When thus Sir Neil had forward gone,

- The King soon after, hurrying on,
In three days reached Loch Lomond's strand,
But not a boat was there at hand
To bear them to the other shore,
Which was a disappointment sore,
For, as it was a long way round,
412 They feared they might by foes be found
Who held the country far and wide.
Therefore along Loch Lomond side
With anxious care for boats they sought,
Till James of Douglas found and brought
With all the speed he could to land
A little boat sunk near the strand :
It was so small that it could hold
420 Not more than three at once all told.
The King with heartfelt pleasure heard,
When of this find they brought him word.
Himself first on the boat is gone,
Douglas with him ; the third was one
That rowed the warriors safely o'er
And set them dry upon the shore.
He rowed so often o'er the lake,
428 And two or sometimes one would take,
That, ere a night and day had passed,
He landed all even to the last :
Some could swim well and on their backs
Carried their little all in packs :
This way by swimming or by oar
All safely crossed from shore to shore.
The King meanwhile with merry air
436 Read to the men who with him were
Of valiant Ferambrace the tale
Whose valour was of no avail,
Against the doughty Oliver ;
And how the peers of Charlemagne were
Shut in the walls of Egrymore
Which the King Lavyne lay before
With thousands more than I can tell.
444 Eleven peers within did dwell
Besides one woman, hard beset,
For no provisions could they get

- Save what they captured from the foe,
And yet such valour did they show
That they resisted manfully
Till Richard, Duke of Normandy,
Spite of his foes contrived to bring
452 The joyful tidings to the King,
Who thought that they had all been slain.
Therefore he turned in haste again,
Won Mantrybill, and Flagot crossed,
Then King Lavyne his navy lost
And was defeated utterly,
And the great peers were all set free.
So Charlemagne by his valiance
460 Won for himself the nails and lance,
The thorns that crowned our Saviour's head,
Part of the cross on which He bled.
'Twas thus Bruce did his best to cheer
The heart of those men who were near,
Telling them tales of days of yore
Till all were on the western shore.
Spite of the many foes they had,
468 They made them merry and were glad,
When all had gained the further shore :
Yet oftentimes they suffered sore
For want of food enough to eat,
And that the deer might yield them meat,
In two divisions are they gone :
The King himself commanded one,
While of the other hunting band
476 Sir James the Douglas had command.
Then to the hills they made their way
And hunted most part of the day :
They set their toils, the woods they beat,
But thereby got not much to eat.
Now at this time, as so befell,
Among those very hills did dwell
The Earl of Lennox. With surprise
484 He heard the hunters' horns and cries ;
He wondered much what meant the sound,
And, when he made enquiry, found
It was his rightful King who chased

- The deer. So then he went with haste,
Himself and all his following,
To give his greeting to the King :
So blythe and full of joy was he,
492 That never man could happier be.
The King had met his death, he thought :
Wherefore his mind was so distraught,
He could in no fixed dwelling stay :
Ever since Methven's fatal day
He had no news of Bruce received
That could for certain be believed.
Therefore, delighted at the meeting,
500 He gave the King a hearty greeting,
And bade him welcome to the place,
And kissed him fondly on the face.
And all the nobles that were there
Most happy at that meeting were,
Saluting him with great delight.
In truth, it was a touching sight
To see the joyous teardrops pour
508 When thus they saw their friends once more,
Whom they had numbered with the dead.
Therefore more earnestly they said
Their words of welcome. Bruce wept too,
O'erjoyed to meet those comrades true.
I said he wept, but I suspect
The word so used was not correct.
For weeping surely pain implies
516 Or grief that overflows the eyes.
No one can weep whose mind's at ease,
But women, who whene'er they please,
Although no cause of grief appears,
Contrive to wet their cheek with tears.
I know well, if the truth be said,
Whate'er men think of tears so shed,
That heartfelt joy in such an hour
524 May so the feelings overpower
That moisture from the heart will rise
And overcharge with tears the eyes.
This may of weeping take the name,
Although it is not quite the same,

For those who weep, so means the word,
Must be by grief or suffering stirred.
Tears due to sympathy, I know,

- 532 Are nothing but an overflow
Straight from the heart and may declare
The depth of tender feeling there.

Now when the Barons by God's grace
Were thus assembled in one place,
The Earl had store of meat, and glad
He was to give them all he had.
Keen appetite they all possessed,

- 540 Which is of sauces far the best.
As hunger had their stomachs scoured,
Their food they eagerly devoured.
Thus with glad heart they ate their food,
And praised our Lord in thankful mood,
For full of gratitude they were
To find themselves assembled there.

- 548 The King asked how the time had passed
Since they had seen each other last,
And with compassion heard them tell
What sore afflictions them befell,
How they had lived in poverty
From mortal peril never free.
Himself, too, in as sad a strain
Told them the labour and the pain
That he had had to undergo.

- 556 Was none among them, high or low,
But was to pleasing ruth inclined,
While by such talk they brought to mind
Remembrance of their woes gone by.
When we enjoy security,
Of troubles passed to tell and hear
Is wondrous pleasant to the ear.

- And to recall our evil plight
564 Affords great solace and delight,
If only we are free from blame,
Dishonour, wickedness, and shame.
After they all had eaten well,
And there was nothing left to tell,
The King rose with his company

- And went in haste towards the sea.
Neil Campbell on the shore he met,
572 Whom he had sent before to get
Ships, sails, and oars and all beside
Required to take them o'er the tide.
They got on board and left the shore.
Some held the helm, some plied the oar,
And past the Isle of Bute they ran
Observed by many a free-born man,
Who on the coasts of Bute abode
580 And watched the strangers as they rowed.
Then many a warrior's stalwart hand,
That wont to wield the spear and brand,
So firmly grasped the seaman's oar,
That the rough wood their fingers tore,
For all were working, knight and knave,
None would from toil exemption crave :
Eager to reach the further shore.
588 Some held the helm, some pulled the oar.
But when, as you have heard me say,
The Bruce's fleet was under weigh,
The Earl of Lennox—I can't tell
By what mischance it so befell,—
Behind did with his vessel stay,
Until the King was far away.
The country people when they find
596 The Earl of Lennox left behind,
By sea with vessels him pursue.
The Earl too well his weakness knew :
Those traitors he could not defy,
No hope of succour was more nigh
Than the King's fleet, which to regain
He therefore strove with might and main.
The traitors followed him so fast,
604 They nearly caught him up at last.
For all the efforts of his crew
Nearer and nearer still they drew,
And when he saw the foe so near,
That he could well their menace hear,
And coming near and nearer still,
He cried, "Unless it be our will

- That we should overtaken be,
612 We must devise some subtlety.
My counsel is that we should keep
Our arms alone, and in the deep
Casting all else without delay,
Row on with all the speed we may.
When thus we have relieved the ship,
She'll give our enemies the slip.
While they delay to make their own
620 Our goods upon the waters thrown,
We, rowing with redoubled speed,
Can safely on our way proceed.”
They did just as he bade them do,
And overboard their baggage threw,
And onward rowed with all their might.
The ship by this means made more light,
Over the water swiftly goes,
628 The while the disappointed foes,
Seeing how far they lag behind,
Pick up whatever things they find
Strewn on the waves, their course retrace,
And urge no more the bootless chase.
After the Earl of Lennox so
Escaped from the pursuing foe,
He hurried on to join the King,
636 Who then with all his following
Had come to Cantyre there to dwell.
The Earl told all he had to tell,
How he was chased upon the sea
By those who should his servants be,
And had been taken without doubt,
Had he not thought of casting out
All that he had to ease the ship,
644 And so had given his foes the slip.
“Having, Sir Earl,” replied the Bruce
“Escaped, thou has not much excuse
Thy lost possessions to deplore.
But I would say just one word more :
It scarcely can be wise in thee
Often to leave my company.
Thou hast good cause to rue the day,

- 652 As often as thou goest away.
Therefore methinks 'tis best for thee
At all times to abide with me."
"Sir," said the Earl, "it shall be so :
I will no distance from you go.
Till by God's grace we can defy
The malice of the enemy."
- Angus at that time ruled Islay
- 660 And over all Cantyre had sway.
He to his sovereign homage paid,
And kindly words of welcome said,
And he and his in every way
Promised they would the King obey,
And for more safety placed him in
His castle of Donavardyn,
Therein, long as he pleased, to dwell,
- 668 For which King Robert thanked him well
And for his freely offered aid.
But none the less he was afraid
He might to treason fall a prey,
And therefore, as I heard men say,
He would on no man's faith rely,
Unless he knew him thoroughly,
Though those distrusted could not trace
- 676 Suspicion in his friendly face.
The King no longer than three days
In Donavardyn castle stays
And bids his followers prepare
To Rathlin overseas to fare,
An island best described to be
Fixed in the middle sea
Betwixt Cantire and Ireland's shore
- 684 Where those who would the strait cross o'er
Are swept resistlessly along
By currents terrible and strong,
As the great Race of Brittany
Or wild Morocco's narrow sea.
Their ships upon the sea they set
And zealously all ready get
Abundance of seagoing stores,
- 692 Anchors and ropes and sails and oars ;

Soon for the start the warriors were
All ready and the wind was fair.

- They spread their sails and, coasting round
The Mull of Cantyre, soon they found,
That they were by the current strong
With power resistless swept along,
And waves like hills on every side
700 With crested summits they descried.
Helped by the breeze behind that blew,
Merrily o'er the waves they flew,
But none the less who there had been,
That day, had strange confusion seen
Among the ships ; some to the sky
Were lifted up on billows high :
And some from high to low down fell
708 As if they sought the depths of Hell,
Then rising suddenly would ride
The waves, while other ships beside
Slid deftly down into the deep.
It needed no small skill to keep
Their tackle in that current strong
And such tumultuous waves among.
Often, though it was close at hand,
716 They suddenly lost sight of land,
For, when the ships were coming nigh
The shore, the waves would rise so high,
That ever and anon their height
Concealed the island coast from sight :
Yet not a single life was lost,
Though stormy was the sea they crossed.
Those hideous waves had missed their prey :
724 So blithe and glad at heart were they,
When all arrived at Rathlin strand
And from their vessels leapt on land
All fully armed in gallant style.
The men who dwelt upon the isle,
When they saw such a powerful band
Of warriors coming to their land,
Their flocks and herds together brought,
732 And in their stronghold refuge sought,
A castle great that stood thereby.

- Then might one hear the women cry
Driving their cattle here and there ;
But the King's men so active were,
That, ere they could run far away,
They were caught up and made to stay,
And all before the King were ta'en,
740 And thus not one of them was slain.
Soon by persuasive words the Bruce
Did all the Rathlin folk induce
To take his part and be his men,
So that they promised there and then,
For worse or better they would still,
Both they and theirs, obey his will,
And, while it pleased him to reside
748 Upon the isle, they would provide
All his three hundred men with food.
Provided it was understood
They kept their own possessions free,
King Robert Bruce their lord should be.
The treaty being made this way,
On the next morn without delay
Both young and old the people went
756 Before the King, and humbly bent,
In sign of homage, swearing they
Would loyally his hest obey.
And never from that oath they swerved :
With humble truth the King they served,
And, while he dwelt within their land,
Supplied with food his warrior band.

Book IV.

- Now let us leave the King a while
Enjoying rest on Rathlin isle,
And pay attention to his foes,
Who by their power inflicted woes
And, trusting in superior might,
Ever oppressed with cruel spite
All those who held King Robert dear
8 Or were to him by kindred near.
'Tis sad to tell their cruelty :
Pity they showed to no degree,
Nor high nor low in church or state :
Of Bruce's friends so keen their hate,
That into prison strong they threw
And bound with fetters prelates two,
Bishops of Glasgow and of Man.
16 By one deserving Judas' ban
Good Chrystal Seton was betrayed
And into Loudon fort conveyed.
This traitor, who Macnab was hight,
Had lived with Seton day and night,
And gained much by his company.
'Twas something worse than treachery
In this base manner to trepan
24 So noble and so good a man.
He had no pity in his heart :
May he be doomed in Hell to smart !
When Seton had been thus betrayed,
A troop of horsemen him conveyed
Through England to the King with speed,
Who ruthlessly his death decreed.
So he was drawn, beheaded, hung :
32 It is great sorrow to be sung,

That such a worthy knight as he
 Should in such manner treated be.
 So died one of the best of men :
 Also Sir Ronald Crawford then
 Was captured with Sir Bryce the Blair
 And hanged within a barn at Ayr.

- The Queen and Lady Marjory,
 40 Who afterwards was honourably
 Bound in the church by holy vows
 To Walter Stewart as his spouse,
 By no means longer would consent
 To be within Kildrummy pent,
 But, rather than a siege abide,
 Would from the castle quickly ride
 With squires and knights through Ross to Tain
 48 And all their trouble was in vain,
 Because the people did not dare
 For them the risk of blame to bear,
 But one and all to England sent
 Even from the holy altar rent
 Straight to the King, who gave command
 To hang what men were in the band.
 The ladies he resolved to keep
 56 In castle high or dungeon deep.
 'Tis sad to tell this tale of woe
 Of people persecuted so.

- Now all this time Kildrummy's hold
 Was manned by warriors strong and bold.
 Sir Nigel Bruce, as well I know,
 Was there and Athole's Earl also.
 The garrison had store of food
 64 And for their fires sufficient wood.
 The castle had been strengthened so,
 They thought it could defy the foe.
 Now, when the English King was told,
 That these men were resolved to hold
 The castle, he was filled with rage
 And called his son who was in age
 The oldest, his apparent heir,
 72 A bachelor stalwart, tall and fair,
 Sir Edward of Carnarvon hight,

- And Prince of Wales, a man of might :
You nowhere may expect to see
A man of greater might than he.
The Earls he summoned to his board
Of Gloucester and of Hereford,
And bade them and the prince with speed
80 An army into Scotland lead.
There to beleaguer that stronghold
And without quarter slay the bold
Defenders all or bring them chained
To be in prison strong detained.
They, being told this thing to do,
At once a host together drew,
And to the castle bent their course,
88 Which they attacked with all their force.
Often the strong walls were assailed
Most fiercely, but their efforts failed,
For there were doughty men within,
Who made the castle hard to win,
And forth to meet the foe would come,
And some they slew and wounded some,
And often times they would assail
96 The English at the barrier's pale.
So many they had hurt or slain,
So well themselves they did maintain,
That in despair the baffled foe
Were minded from the siege to go,
For, when they saw the castle strong
Provided well with food for long
And the brave men that manned the wall,
104 They teared that it would never fall :
Little they would have done that season
Unless they had been helped by treason.
But there was found a traitor base,
A lying rascal, in the place,
Osborne by name, who did the treason,
I cannot tell you for what reason,
Nor who with him the treason shared,
112 But, as those who were there declared,
This traitor knave a coulter got
That on a fire was glowing hot,

- Went to a hall in which was stored
 Of corn a large and precious hoard,
 And threw it high upon a heap,
 Nor could it there long hidden keep,
 For wise men say that fire and pride
 120 Are things impossible to hide.
 Pride is revealed by vain display
 And boastful words that proud men say,
 And fire you cannot well conceal
 Which flame or smoke will soon reveal.
 So fell it here ; the fire grew bright
 And through the thick board showed its light,
 First as a star, then as a moon,
 128 And it grew broader, clearer soon,
 Till it burst out in flames at last
 And up the smoke flew wondrous fast.
 No mortal efforts can assuage
 The flames that o'er the castle rage :
 So those within draw to the wall,
 Which at that time was battled all
 Within just as it was without.
 136 These battlements without a doubt
 Save them from death, because they break
 The flames that would them overtake.
 Soon as their foes the mischief knew
 And spied the flames, to arms they flew.
 Excepting where the fire debarred
 Their path, they pressed the castle hard.
 But they within, by need constrained,
 144 Most bravely the defence maintained.
 Oft from the walls the foe they chased
 And every peril boldly faced.
 They struggled hard to save their lives,
 But destiny, that all things drives
 On to the end, so with them wrought,
 That on both sides with foes they fought,
 Within with flames that scorched them sore,
 152 Without with men, that more and more
 Prevailed, and burnt the castle gate,
 But for the fire they had to wait.
 They could not venture on that day

To enter in, but went away
To take their rest, for it was night,
And waited for the morning light.

- In such distress, you've heard me say,
160 Were those within. However they
Quitted themselves so valiantly
And set to work so manfully,
That before daylight with great pain
They walled the entrance up again.
But on the morrow, when 'twas light,
Soon as the sun was shining bright,
In war array the English all
168 Came to attack the castle wall.
The Scots within, most sore bestead
For want of corn to make them bread,
After a parley with the foe
Must come perforce to terms, and so
The garrison to Edward's will
Submitted, which was very ill
For Scotsmen, as was soon made plain,
176 For they were all on gallows slain.
The English, when this pact was signed,
So that it might securely bind,
Have taken out the garrison
And in short time such damage done,
That the fourth part of Snowdoun's round
Of walls was levelled with the ground.
To England then they made their way :
184 But when King Edward heard men say,
How Nigel Bruce had held so long
Against his son that castle strong,
He for his knights and nobles sent,
And on the way to Scotland went.
As he rode through Northumberland
Surrounded by his warlike band,
A sickness on the way he caught,
192 By which so low his strength was brought,
That he could neither walk nor ride.
Spite of his anger and his pride
He was perforce compelled to stay
In a small hamlet by the way.

- As his attendants took him there,
Most grievous pains he had to bear :
His voice through sickness fainter grew,
200 The breath of life with pain he drew.
By chance, howe'er, he bade them say,
What was the town wherein he lay.
“ Sir,” said they, “ Burgh-on-the-sand
Men call the town within this land.”
“ Call they it Burgh ? Alas,” said he,
“ My hope is perished utterly.
I thought I should escape death's pain,
208 Till I had won through might and main
The borough of Jerusalem ;
'Twas there I thought death's stream to stem.
That in a borough I should die
I knew, but other borough I
Forgot to think of. Now, I know
That I shall hence no farther go.”
So now his folly he lamented
216 And with good reason he repented,
That he had made a certainty
Of what can never certain be.
They say he had a spirit tied
In bondage who to him replied,
Whate'er he chose to ask about.
But he was foolish without doubt
To place reliance on that creature,
224 For demons are of such a nature
That each of them is mankind's foe,
Which is because so well they know
That men who live well here, shall there
Attain the seats from which they were
Down tumbled for excessive pride,
Wherefore it often will betide
That, when they are by mortals tasked
232 To come and answer what they're asked
By magic conjuration's might,
They are so false and full of spite,
That they such answers will prepare
As may a double meaning bear
To cheat those who on them rely,

- And this I shall exemplify
By that which, as I heard, did chance
240 Once when the Flemings warred with Franc
Earl Ferrand's mother raised from Hell e.
Satan by necromantic spell,
And told him that she fain would know
For certain how the war would go
Between the French King and her son,
And he, as he has always done,
When called upon to prophesy,
248 Gave an ambiguous reply—
“*Rex ruet in bello tumulique carebit honore.
Ferrandus, comitissa, tuus, mea cara Minerva,
Parisius veniet, magna comitante caterva.*”
These Latin verses that he sung
I render in the English tongue—
“The French King shall in battle fall
And lack the rites of burial,
256 And thy Ferrand, Minerve, my dear,
In Paris doubtless shall appear,
And in his train shall ride that day
Of gallant knights a proud array.”
So said the verses that were sung
By Satan in the Latin tongue.
He called the lady his Minerve,
Because Minerva used to serve
264 Him well, whate'er he wished to do,
And, as this lady served him too,
He called her by Minerva's name,
And, that he might beguile the dame,
He in his cunning called her “dear,”
So to cajole her judgment clear,
And for his riddling words suggest
The meaning that would please her best.
272 The double sense deceived her quite
And caused the death of many a knight,
For, by the answer rendered bold,
The glad news to her son she told,
And bade him forth to battle go
Secure of triumph o'er the foe.
Earl Ferrand followed her behest

- And on to war and battle pressed,
280 Where he was quite discomfited
And into Paris captive led.
Yet ere he won the victory,
The French King through his chivalry
Was lamed and thrown upon the ground,
But a fresh horse for him was found.
When Ferrand's mother first heard tell
Of all that to her son befell,
288 And how in battle he was ta'en,
She called up Satan to explain,
And in great anger asked him why
He'd fooled her by a false reply.
But he declared his words were all
Quite true, "I said the King should fall
In battle. Did he not do so?
He is unburied as all know.
296 Thy son, I told thee, should proceed
To Paris and 'twas so indeed.
For there he went with followers more
Than ever in his life before
Were seen to follow in his train.
So call not my prediction vain."
The lady, disconcerted by
The devil's speech, made no reply.
304 By double-meaning words the mind
Of the one party was made blind,
And so was ended this debate.
Not different was King Edward's fate,
For in Jerusalem he thought
He would to burial be brought,
But yet he died in his own land
Even at Burgh-in-the-sand.
312 Now when his death was close at hand,
His captains from the northern land
Came with the captives they had made
And to the King a visit paid,
Thinking that they would please him well
By telling how Kildrummy fell,
And how the garrison they brought,
With whom he might do what he thought

- 320 Was best, or punish them or spare.
Then grinning with a ghastly glare
He " Hang and draw " was heard to mutter.
'Twas strange that he such words should utter,
That one who had not long to live
Should such a cruel answer give,
And mercy to those men deny.
How could he then for mercy cry
- 328 Or ask the Judge, in whose control
Is all the world, to spare his soul,
When he himself was merciless
And carried hate to such excess ?
After his men his word obeyed,
Not long in life King Edward stayed :
Him to his burial-place they bore,
And England's crown young Edward wore.
- 336 Turn we to Robert Bruce again,
Who at Rathlin with all his train
Was well provided day by day
With food till winter passed away.
It did not James of Douglas please
That they should be so long at ease ;
So to Sir Robert Boyd he spoke,
" You see how these poor Arran folk
- 344 Are sorely burdened to supply
Our needs while we thus idle lie.
On Arran's isle, as I am told,
The English are in force, and hold
A castle strong, and with hard hand
Afflict the people of the land.
Methinks that, if we thither go,
We may do mischief to the foe."
- 352 " Tis true," Sir Robert Boyd replied
" We should no longer here abide.
Let us across to Arran go,
For that great castle well I know
And all the country round about,
So that we shall get there without
Much fear that any hostile eye
Will us upon our way descry :
And we shall near in ambush be

- Where we can their outcoming see :
360 So somehow we may deal a blow
Upon the unsuspecting foe.”
Then for the start they ready made,
And farewell to King Robert said.
Launching their ships, and passing o’er
The sea, they soon made Cantire shore,
368 And rowing always near the land
Until the night was near at hand,
Onward to Arran made their way
And there arrived without delay.
A cliff above them made a screen
So that their ship could not be seen.
Their oars, their tackle, and their store
They hid with care upon the shore.
376 Then they went forward through the night,
So that, before ’twas fully light,
Arrayed for war they lay in wait
In ambush near the castle gate.
Weary and wet although they were
And long had lived on meagre fare,
They chose to lie in ambush low
Till they could deal a telling blow.
384 A knight, Sir John the Hastings named,
With many another warrior famed
And with a goodly company
Of squires and valiant yeomanry
In Brodic castle ruled as lord,
Who, when it pleased him to afford
His soul some pleasure, with his band
Would hunt. So stern was his command
392 That no one dared withstand his will.
This knight was in the castle still,
When Douglas, as you heard me say,
Before the walls in ambush lay.
Now at that time, as so befell,
With clothes and food provided well,
And armour too, a plenteous store,
The evening of the day before
400 The warden’s second in command
Two loaded boats had brought to land

- Close to the place where, as I said,
Douglas and Boyd their ambush laid.
Soon they saw landing on the shore
Some thirty English men or more,
Who various things conveyed to land,
Meat, beer, and wine, bow, shield, and brand.
- 408 What odds and ends the others bare
I need not in my verse declare.
Some idly went with empty hand
As if they did the rest command.
All this the men in ambush saw :
Then fearlessly their swords they draw
And, rushing fiercely from the brake,
Slay all whom they can overtake.
- 416 Arose a wild and hideous cry
Of men who feared they were to die.
Like stricken beasts they cried and roared
And mercy vainly they implored,
So that the Englishmen who there
Were slaughtered nearly forty were.
When those the castle wall within
Heard from without that hideous din,
- 424 They issued forth with sword and spear.
Soon as he saw them coming near,
Sir James of Douglas was not slow
To call his men and charge the foe.
The Englishmen at once drew back
Fearing to face his bold attack :
Hotly pursued they strove to gain
The castle, many strove in vain,
- 432 For some were slain as in they passed.
The castle gate they barred so fast
That they could not be hurt at all ;
So Douglas left the castle wall,
Returning to the sea once more,
Where they had slain the men before.
When those the English boats who mann'd
Saw Douglas and his trusty band
- 440 Return victorious from the fray,
They put to sea without delay,
And bending to their oars rowed fast.

- But hard against them was the blast ;
So high the breakers gan to rise,
That they could stem the sea no wise,
And were so rudely tempest-tost,
That of the three boats two were lost,
448 Because they dared not come to land.
When Douglas this did understand,
The food, wine, arms and clothes he took
With other things the foe forsook,
And with his comrades went away
Right glad and joyful of his prey.
In this way by God's favour then
Were James of Douglas and his men
456 Provided well with arms and clothes
And food intended for their foes.
Then to a hold they made their way,
And manfully to the tenth day
Maintained themselves, when came the King
To Arran, and with him did bring
From Rathlin isle his followers all
In three and thirty galleys small.
464 The King, arrived on Arran's strand,
Marched with his forces through the land.
There in a town he quarters found
And asked of all the people round,
If any one had aught to say
Of strangers who had come that way.
" Yes," said a woman in reply
To Bruce's question, " That have I.
472 Of strangers here I can you tell,
Who in this land have come to dwell,
And at their hands not long ago
Our Warden met his overthrow.
They many an Englishman have slain
And a strong post with power maintain."
" Dame," said the King, " if thou wouldst show
The place to which those strangers go,
480 I would an ample guerdon pay,
For vassals of my house are they.
And I right blithely would them see
And they would blithely welcome me."

“ Sir,” said the woman, “ I will go
Gladly with you the place to show
To which your trusty friends repair.”

“ That is enough, my sister fair.

488 Now forward,” said the King, and so
Upon the word they forward go,
He and his company behind
And she in front, until they find
Before their eyes a woody glen.

“ Sir, here,” said she, “ I saw the men,
Whom you so much desire to meet.
This is, I trow, their woodland seat.”

496 The King now blew his bugle clear
And asked his comrades who stood near
To keep themselves concealed from view,
And then another blast he blew.
When James of Douglas heard him blow,
He did not fail the blast to know.

“ That is the King’s horn, I can tell.
I know,” he said, “ his blowing well.”

504 When a third blast King Robert blew,
Sir Robert Boyd could tell it too,
And said, “ That is the King, I swear :
Let us at once to him repair.”

So to the King without delay
They hastened their respects to pay,
Who kindly welcomed them, for he
Was much rejoiced his friends to see,

512 And kissed them all, and bade them tell
Whether their hunting had gone well.
They told him what had taken place
And gave God thanks for all His grace.
Then to the King’s abode they went
With hearts most joyful and content.

King Robert, when the next day broke,
Thus to his trusty henchmen spoke,

520 “ With your own eyes ye well may see,
My friends, that banished men are we,
Banished through England’s greater might.
The land that should be ours by right
By force of arms they occupy

- And mercy unto all deny.
'Twould please them to destroy us all :
But God forbid that it should fall
528 To us according to their threat,
For then our case were desperate.
'Tis nature bids us on our foes
Wreak vengeance for our country's woes.
Remember there are reasons three
That sharply spur us on to be
Valiant and wise and do the worst
We can to harm those foes accurst.
536 One is the safety of our lives,
For never one of us survives
If they may carry out their threats.
Then secondly our soul it frets,
That they without just cause should hold
Possessions that were ours of old.
And thirdly, if we should succeed
(And of despair there is no need,)
544 Think of the triumph and the joy,
When we the tyrants' power destroy.
So let no danger us appal,
Or make our hopes and spirits fall,
But let us aim at such an end
As honour, glory, praise attend.
If, all things duly weighed, to you
It seems a wise course to pursue,
552 Let us to Carrick send a man
Who may the realm's condition scan
And find out who is friend or foe,
And, if we well to land may go,
Then on Turnberry Nook he may
Upon a predetermined day
By firelight make us understand
That we may there in safety land.
560 But if the peril would be dire,
Let him by no means light the fire.
He will inform us in this way
Whether we ought to go or stay."
When all approved the Bruce's plan,
Without delay he called a man,

- Who was his countryman and friend
And knew the land from end to end.
568 He gave him charge to go ashore
And do just as I said before.
The day was fixed, on which he might
Make signal by the beacon light,
If he should think that in that land
They might the English power withstand.
And he, who honestly did will
His lord's commandment to fulfil,
576 Since he both valiant was and leal
And able secrets to conceal,
Said he was bound in every way
His master's orders to obey ;
The work he would so wisely do,
That blame should not to him accrue.
Then to the King he said good-bye
And went before the land to spy.
- 584 Now goes the messenger his way,
His name was Cuthbert, I heard say.
He soon arrived on Carrick's strand,
And quickly traversed all the land,
But many there he could not find,
Who to his lord were well inclined.
Through fear some played a hostile part,
And some were hostile in their heart
- 592 To Scotland's King, men who, too late,
Repented of their foolish hate.
Both high and low the land was then
All occupied by Englishmen,
Who hated above every thing
Robert the Bruce, the doughty King.
At that time all the Carrick lands
Were in Sir Henry Percy's hands,
- 600 Who in Turnberry castle then
Was with well nigh three hundred men,
And did the folk so overawe
That everywhere his word was law.
This Cuthbert saw their villainy
And saw the folk so utterly
Side with the English, high and low,

- That he let none his errand know ;
608 He thought the signal should not burn
And he should to his lord return
And all their disaffection tell,
Which was so bitter and so fell.
The King who still in Arran lay,
As soon as came the appointed day
On which the signal light should flare,
If only fortune promised fair,
616 Gazed forth to see that signal light,
And, when the moon went out of sight,
He thought he saw the fire appear
Upon Turnberry burning clear.
He showed his men what seemed the flame
And one and all they thought the same.
Then all at once they gladly cried
“ May God Almighty be your guide,
624 So that we may arrive this eve
And none our coming may perceive.”
“ Prepare,” Bruce said, “ to start to-day,
And may God speed us on our way.”
Then speedily you might them see
Launch all their galleys to the sea
And oars and rudders seaward bear
And other things that needful were.
632 Now, while beside the starting-place
King Robert up and down did pace,
Waiting till all things ready were,
His hostess came straight to him there,
And after her respects were paid,
A secret speech to him she made
And “ To my words attention pay,”
She said, “ for, ere you go away,
640 I’ll tell you much that will befall,
And of your fortune most of all
Some revelation I will make,
What course your enterprise will take.
For no one living can descry
Future events as well as I.
From Arran now you go along
To wreak your vengeance for the wrong

- 648 Those English tyrants perpetrate,
 But little do you know the fate,
 That you must in your wars endure.
 Yet on my word you may be sure,
 That, from the time you come to land,
 There is no might or strength of hand
 Can drive you from your realm away
 Till all the country owns your sway.
- 656 Ere long you shall attain the throne
 And all the land shall be your own
 And you shall all your foes subdue.
 But ere you gain the end in view,
 Affliction sore you must endure :
 Yet triumph at the last is sure.
 That you may know these words are true,
 My two sons I will send with you
- 664 To share the toils you undergo.
 They shall not fail, full well I know,
 To be rewarded, as is right,
 When you attain your glory's height."
 The King to her attention paid
 And thanked her for the words she said,
 Which were some comfort to his mind :
 But yet he was not much inclined
- 672 To trust her speech, for how could she
 So certain of the future be ?
 'Tis passing strange how any man
 By gazing on the heavens can
 Foretell exactly all or some
 Of those things that are yet to come,
 Unless he should inspired be
 By Him whose eyes can all things see,
- 680 So that in His foreknowledge clear
 The future present does appear,
 As David was and Jeremiah,
 And Samuel, Joel, and Isaiah,
 Who saw by God's especial grace
 Events that afterwards took place.
 Prophets like these are thinly sown,
 And not one at this day is known,
- 688 But many long to see revealed

What in the future is concealed,
 So that, by aid of learning great
 Or devils that upon them wait,
 Some way or other they contrive
 Into futurity to dive.

- One way astrology is named,
 By which great clerks for wisdom famed
 696 Conjunctions of the planets know,
 And whether in their course they go
 To mansions that bode well or ill ;
 Of all parts of the sky they will
 Clearly determine by their lore
 What influence on the earth they pour,
 How planets work in different ways
 On regions subject to their ravs ;
 704 According as their beams incline
 Oblique or fall in a straight line,
 Their influence is less or more.
 Surely most wondrous is their lore,
 Who by astrology can say
 What will take place and on what day ;
 For though a man's whole life be given
 To study of the book of heaven
 712 And on the stars he break his head,
 He will not make, wise men have said,
 In all his life predictions three
 That can lay claim to certainty,
 And even these three will be in doubt
 Till their fulfilment's brought about.
 Astrologers are often wrong :
 Although they study late and long,
 720 And know the time of birth full well,
 And can the constellations tell,
 That make a human being's will.
 By nature turn to good or ill ;
 Although a learned man may be
 An adept in astrology,
 So that he can the perils state
 That different characters await,
 728 I trow that he shall fail to say
 The things that to them happen may.

- For though by nature's force the mind
Be well or evilly inclined,
Reason and nurture's regiment
May prove too strong for nature's bent,
So that one's nature turns right round ;
For it has oftentimes been found,
- 736 That men who are to evil given
Have from their souls the evil driven,
Achieving thereby fair renown,
Spite of a constellation's frown.
In books of ancient Greece we read
That Aristotle was indeed
By nature grasping and untrue,
But he by reason virtuous grew.
- 744 So since astrology depends
On influence that sometimes bends
To human will, its forecasts must
Be looked upon with great distrust.
Also the necromantic art
News of the future would impart,
And teaches men in various wise
To conjure and to exorcise,
- 752 Raising the devils from below
To tell them what they want to know,
As did the Endor Pythoness,
Who, when King Saul was in distress
And crushed beneath Philistia's might
Raised up by necromantic sleight
Dead Samuel from his rocky bed
Or a bad spirit in his stead,
- 760 That answered every question well :
The witch herself could nothing tell.
So men are evermore in fear
Of things that terrible appear,
And brood upon events afar
That in the future shrouded are.
Since such imaginings are vain
And none can certainty attain,
- 768 Who claims sure knowledge in such matters
In my opinion idly chatters.
I know not if the woman wise,

Who told the King how his emprise
Should end, was guessing or knew well,
But all that she foretold befell,
For, as she said, he won the crown
And raised himself to high renown.

Book V.

- This was in spring when overpast
Was cruel winter's biting blast,
And now the thrush and nightingale
Charmed with their singing hill and dale,
And other little birds began
To fill with joy the soul of man
By pouring forth their woodnotes clear
8 Which are so pleasant to the ear.
The buds began to make a show
And flowers of various hues to blow,
And trees, by winter stripped, were seen
Once more to wrap their heads in green.
So, when the groves were green in spring,
Robert the Bruce, that noble King,
With ships and his small company,
16 Perhaps three hundred they might be,
Before the light began to fail,
Boldly from Arran's isle set sail ;
Onward they rowed with all their might
Until upon them came the night.
So thick the pall of darkness fell,
That where they were they could not tell.
They neither needle had nor stone,
24 But guided by the fire alone,
Which still before them brightly glowed,
Over the darkling sea they rowed.
It was by chance that they were led,
But in short time so well they sped,
That, at the fire arriving, they
All came ashore without delay.
Now Cuthbert, who had seen the light,
32 Was full of anger at the sight,
But did not dare to put it out,
Although his mind was full of doubt
For fear his lord should cross the strait.

- Therefore, he thought it best to wait
And meet them coming on the shore :
He soon was brought the King before,
Who asked what progress he had made :
- 40 Then sadly he in answer said,
That, though he searched the country round,
No loyal-hearted men he found,
And that Sir Henry Percy then
With not less than three hundred men
Was in the castle there beside
Puffed up with insolence and pride ;
But more than two parts of his rout
- 48 Was harboured in the town without.
“ And they despise you more, Sir King,
Than if you were the meanest thing.”
Then said the King in full great ire,
“ Traitor, why didst thou light the fire ? ”
“ Ah, sir, so God me save,” said he
“ That fire was never lit by me.
Till this night I perceived it not,
- 56 But when I noticed it, I thought
That you and all your company
Would hastily put out to sea.
Therefore I came to tell you here
The perils that you have to fear.”
- The King heard with an angry air
And bade his councillors declare
What course they thought best to pursue.
- 64 The first who answer gave thereto
Was Edward, Bruce's brother bold,
Who said, “ You may for certain hold,
That all the perils that may be
Shall never drive me back to sea.
Whatever fortune has in store,
I will abide on Scotland's shore.”
- “ Since such, my brother, is thy will,”
- 72 Replied the King, “ then, well or ill,
Whatever fortune God provide,
'Tis good we should together bide.
The Percy, as I understand,
Would be the master of my land :

- His followers are full of spite
And lodge not far away this night ;
Let us reward them for their hate
80 By vengeance ere it be too late,
For blindly confident they lie,
And dream not of our coming nigh.
Although we kill them ere they wake,
No one thereat need umbrage take,
For warriors no difference know,
If only they defeat the foe,
Whether by craft or force they win,
88 Unless against good faith they sin.”
- When this was said, they went their way,
And to the town soon come are they
Moving so silently that none
Perceived them till the town was won.
The strongest doors they open burst
And everywhere they did their worst,
Slaying whom they could overtake,
96 And those who no defence could make,
However much they cried and roared,
Were ruthlessly put to the sword,
For Bruce's men had such good will
To avenge the anger and the ill
The English had against them wrought,
And with such bitter hatred sought
Their foes, that they slew every one
104 Except Macdowal. He alone
Was able to escape through sleight
Aided by darkness of the night.
Lord Percy sitting safe within
The castle walls heard all the din ;
So did his men, who in alarm
And panic fear made haste to arm :
But none was bold enough to go
112 And face the danger down below.
In such alarm they were that night,
Until they saw the morning light,
When died away in part at least
The uproar, and the slaughter ceased.
The King gave all the booty then,

That had been captured, to his men,
And stayed three days, thus having tried
120 To entertain the country-side,
As soon as ever he could land
The first time on his native strand.

When the King and his people were
Arrived, as I have said whilere,
Some time in Carrick he delayed,
To see what friends would give him aid,
Though not much friendship he could find ;
128 And yet the people were inclined
To take his part, but did not dare
Their friendly feelings to declare,
For, crushed beneath the English yoke,
They feared their tyrants to provoke.
Yet of that land one noble dame,
Who with the King could kindred claim,
Was wondrous glad that he came there,
136 And with all haste she did repair
To where the King was quartered then
Bringing behind her fifteen men,
Stout warriors, well equipped to fight
For him when he warred for his right.
The King full glad to get such aid
With thanks her timely gift repaid,
And asked if she could tidings tell
144 Of the good queen and what befell
The others left behind when he
Had late in autumn put to sea.

So she related, sighing sore,
How Neil his brother was no more :
How from Kildrummy castle ta'en,
He had been without pity slain :
And how the Earl of Athole, too,
152 The Queen, and others who were true
Were by the English captives made
And from their native land conveyed
To be immured in English hold.
Then last with many tears she told
How Chrystal Seton had been killed.
The King, his heart with sorrow filled,

- Remained in silence for a spell,
160 Then spoke the words which now I tell.
“ Alas,” he said, “ for love of me
And for their fervent loyalty
These valiant men of high estate
Have perished by a cruel fate,
But, if I live my realm to free,
Then well avenged their death shall be.
The King of England, as it seems,
168 This ancient realm of Scotland deems
Not broad enough for him and me :
So mine the whole of it shall be.
My heart is sad for that good knight,
Sir Chrystal Seton, famed in fight,
That he should thus be foully slain
Not sword in hand on battle plain.”
Thus sadly did King Robert grieve.
176 After the lady took her leave
And back unto her dwelling went,
She often meat and silver sent,
And well supplied her sovereign lord
With all the country could afford.
Himself oft scoured the country round
And seized whatever goods he found,
And then to higher ground withdrew
184 Where none would venture to pursue.
Meanwhile Sir Henry Percy lay
Within Turnberry day by day,
Nor ever ventured forth to fight,
So much he feared the Bruce’s might.
Nor durst he issue out to fare
Thence to the citadel of Ayr,
That then was full of Englishmen,
192 But lurking lay as in a den.
A message to Northumberland
He sent to call a well-armed band
Powerful enough with might and main
To take him to his land again.
So they in haste assembled then
As many as a thousand men,
That they might counsel take and say

- 200 Whether they chose to go or stay.
The most were disinclined to roam
To Scotland far away from home :
Walter de Lisle, a knight, declared
'Twas too great peril to be dared,
Such desperadoes to attack,
And thus he made their courage slack,
So that they never would have gone
- 208 But for Sir Roger of St. John,
Who, well esteemed a valiant knight,
Encouraged them with all his might :
Fired by the words they heard him say,
All to Turnberry made their way.
The Percy leapt upon his horse,
And went with the relieving force,
Till unopposed in safety all
- 216 Arrived at his ancestral hall.
The Percy now is gone away
To England, where, I trow, he'll stay
A while for peace and rest before
He wars again on Carrick shore.
For there he knew he had no right
And much he dreaded Bruce's might,
Who still in Carrick made his stay,
- 224 Wherein his kingdom's stronghold lay.
One day, Sir James of Douglas went
Before the King, " With your consent,
Sir King," he said, " I wish to know
How things in my own country go,
And how my hapless people fare,
For it is hard for me to bear
That Clifford should enjoy at ease
- 232 The revenues and seigniories
That should belong to me by right.
But while I live and still have might
A hind or yeoman to command,
In peace he shall not hold my land."
The King replied, " It seems to me,
That it will very dangerous be
Into that countryside to go
- 240 So strongly guarded by the foe,

And where thou know'st not whom to trust."

Douglas replied, "Sir, go I must,
And take what fortune God may give
Whether it be to die or live."

Then said the King, "Since it is so,
And thou such yearning hast to go,
My blessing do not go without,

248 And, if it e'er should come about
That evil luck beset thy way,
Return to me without delay,
Let us together stand or fall."

Douglas agreed, and therewithal
Bidding the King farewell, he bent
His knee and to his country went.

James Douglas now his way has ta'en
256 With but two yeomen in his train
Towards his native Douglasdale.
How shall such scanty force avail
His castle and his lands to win !
He was resolved well to begin
So that he might as well conclude,
For much avails an opening good,
And oft a bold beginning will,

264 If it is followed up with skill,
Bring an attempt that hopeless seemed,
To such an end as ne'er was dreamed.
So was it here. But he was wise,
And knew that in this enterprise
He could not conquer might by might,
And therefore had to work by sleight.

Just as the day began to fail,
272 The Douglas entered Douglasdale.
The man he lodged with could command
Of friends a large and trusty band.
Rich was he, and, as Douglas knew,
He had been to his father true.
In childhood Douglas' heart was won
By kindly deeds the man had done.
This man (Tom Dixon was his name)
280 Was called by Douglas, when he came
To Douglasdale, to meet him where

- They could in private plans prepare.
They met then without more ado :
When Dixon his young master knew,
For joy and pity tears he shed
And to his house the Douglas led.
There in a chamber privily
- 288 He kept him and his company,
So that none knew that they were there ;
Abundance had they of good fare
And of all other things they needed.
Tom Dixon by his skill succeeded
In bringing those good men and true
Who once the Douglas' father knew
All singly to his house that they
- 296 Might to their young lord homage pay,
And first himself due homage paid.
The good faith of his vassals made
The heart of Douglas very glad,
When such proof of their love he had.
He asked what counsels ruled the land,
Who in the castle held command.
They told him all they had to tell
- 304 And on reflection thought it well,
That for some time he should abide
In secret, and his presence hide
For three days more until the day
When palm boughs every church array,
For then from all the country round
The folk would in the church be found,
And they that in the castle were
- 312 Would also thither palm boughs bear,
As men that had no fear of ill,
Since all, they thought, obeyed their will.
There Douglas with his men should go,
And lest those present might him know,
He should a tattered mantle wear,
And, like a hind, a flail should bear ;
Under his mantle old and bad
- 320 He should in arms of proof be clad,
And, when the men of Douglasdale,
Who should be ready without fail,

- Heard him shout loud his battle cry,
 Then all together valiantly
 Beneath the church's holy vault
 They should the Englishmen assault,
 That no one his escape might make,
 328 For so they had good hope to take
 The Douglas castle which was near.
 Now when this that I tell you here
 Is thought out and resolved upon,
 Then each one to his house is gone
 Where of the matter nought they say,
 But, silent, bide the appointed day.
 Palm Sunday called from far and wide
 336 All to the chapel of Saint Bride,
 And they that in the castle were
 Came to the chapel palms to bear ;
 Both high and low the walls forsook—
 All but a porter and a cook.
 When James of Douglas was aware
 That all did to the church repair,
 He also to the same place hied.
 344 But one within untimely cried,
 Before he came, his battle cry,
 And Thomas Dickson, who stood nigh
 To where the English soldier band
 Within the chancel took their stand,
 Soon as he heard the war-cry sound,
 Drawing his sword, rushed fiercely round,
 Dealing hard blows to left and right
 352 With but one comrade in the fight :
 But they in death are soon laid low.
 With that came Douglas on the foe
 And " Douglas, Douglas," was the cry :
 The English fought right sturdily :
 The chancel they defended well,
 Until a number of them fell ;
 The Douglas with such valour fought
 360 That all whom he had with him brought
 By his example seemed inspired,
 For he with energy untired
 Spared not himself in any way,

- But showed such prowess in the fray,
So mightily his friends sustained,
That soon the chancel they had gained.
They laid about them valiantly,
368 Till of the English one might see
Two-thirds were dying or were dead ;
Those who survived were captive led.
So of the thirty none remain,
But all are either bound or slain.
- James Douglas, when this feat was done,
Taking the prisoners each one,
Together with his company
376 Towards the castle wall did hie,
Ere any noise or cry could rise,
That he might suddenly surprise
The two, who, while their comrades prayed,
Behind within the castle stayed.
Five or six men he sent before,
Who, entering by the open door,
Close by the gate the porter took,
384 And afterwards they seized the cook.
Then Douglas to the gate did go,
And entered in without a blow,
And found a dinner all arrayed,
The meats prepared, the tables laid.
Having barred fast the castle gate,
Down sate they and in safety ate.
Next all the goods they took that they
392 Thought they could lightly bear away ;
Nor arms nor clothes they left behind,
Nor silver that they chanced to find.
'Twas in this manner he destroyed
Victual that could not be convoyed ;
All meat and drink except the salt,
As wheat and flour and meal and malt,
He made them to the cellar bring
400 And on the floor together fling.
There, too, he ordered to behead
The prisoners he had captive led,
And staved the wine-casks that a flood
Of wine might mingle with their blood.

- Thus meal and malt and blood and wine
Met in a mixture to combine
Which was an ugly sight to see,
408 And afterwards it came to be
As **Douglas' larder** far and wide
Renowned through all the country-side.
Then he used salt, as I heard tell,
And horse-flesh to defile the well.
Next all except the stones he burned
And with his company returned
To his retreat. For it was plain
416 That, should they longer there remain,
The English would around them press
To their great danger and distress,
Since hope of rescue they had none,
And 'tis too great a risk to run
In castle walls besieged to be
Unless you can secure things three—
Food, men the ramparts to defend,
424 And hope of rescue in the end.
But as he could not these command,
The Douglas went forth with his band,
So that, in all his movements free,
He might pursue his destiny.
In this way was the castle ta'en
And all the garrison were slain.
Then Douglas's victorious band
432 Was broken up by his command,
For men would less know where they were
When they were scattered here and there.
The wounded through the country round
In secret places shelter found :
Douglas sent leeches who attended
Upon them till their wounds were mended.
Himself kept a small company
440 Of one or two, or sometimes three,
And sometimes all away he sent
And through the country singly went.
So much he feared the English might,
That he durst hardly come in sight,
For at that time the English were

All-powerful masters everywhere.

- But tidings, that full swiftly run,
 448 Of the bold deed by Douglas done,
 Came to the Lord of Clifford's ear.
 He sorrowed much such news to hear,
 And mourned his followers that were slain,
 But soon resolved to build again
 The Douglas castle walls upright,
 And, like a Baron of great might,
 Mustered in haste a powerful band
 456 And rode with them to Douglas' land.
 The castle he rebuilt ere long
 And made it very stout and strong,
 And placed therein meat, drink, and men.
 One of the Thirlwall kindred then
 He left behind him in command
 And so returned to his own land.

- In Carrick still remained the King
 464 With but a scanty following :
 He barely had two hundred men.
 But Edward Bruce, his brother, then
 Had gone to Galloway hard by
 And had another company.
 They held strong places of the land,
 For yet they durst not take in hand
 To scour the country openly,
 472 For at that time Sir Amery,
 Who, as the Warden of the land,
 Obeyed the English King's command,
 And did in Edinburgh dwell,
 As soon as ever he heard tell
 That Robert Bruce had come again
 To Carrick shore and there had slain
 So many of the Percy's men,
 480 Summoned his council there and then,
 And with consent of those who there
 Were met in council sent to Ayr
 The brave Sir Ingram Umphraville
 With a great force to work his will.

Now when Sir Ingram had gone there,
 He did not in his wisdom dare

- To face the King in open fight,
488 But sought to gain his end by sleight.
So in the castle he remained,
Till he intelligence obtained
Of one who active was and shrewd,
In fight not easily subdued
By any man who there did dwell,
And good King Robert knew him well.
He, to the King a kinsman near,
496 Before his presence could appear
By dread of danger undeterred.
But he and his two sons preferred
Out in the country to remain,
So that it might not be too plain
That they were favoured by the King.
They many a time would warning bring
When they of coming danger knew.
504 Therefore he thought them leal and true.
The father's name I cannot well
Remember, but I've heard men tell,
That, though one of his eyes was out,
He was so sturdy and so stout,
That there lived on the Carrick shore
No man whose might was dreaded more.
As soon as e'er Sir Ingram knew
512 That the report he heard was true,
A message for the man he sent
Who to his call obedient went.
The crafty Ingram Umphraville
Won the man over to his will,
So that he undertook to slay
King Robert in some treacherous way.
It was between the two agreed,
520 That, when he'd done the felon deed,
The worth of forty pounds in land
Should be delivered to his hand.
The treason is resolved upon,
The traitor to his house is gone,
To wait a favourable time
At which to perpetrate his crime.
King Robert's danger was extreme,

- 528 For truly he could never dream
That this man whom he trusted so
Should prove himself a deadly foe,
And treachery is easier done
By those who confidence have won.
This wretch, in whom the King believed,
His felon deed would have achieved ;
But by God's grace King Robert got
- 536 Full information of the plot
And how and for what breadth of land
The murder had been ta'en in hand.
I know not whence the warning came :
But all his life it was the same,
That, when against him plots were laid,
The traitors were themselves betrayed,
And often I've heard men declare
- 544 Women he met with here and there
Would tell him all they had to tell,
And so perhaps it now befell,
Howe'er the King the secret knew,
That man his treachery will rue,
Whose evil soul by night and day
Was busily contriving aye,
By what means he could carry through
- 552 The baseness he was pledged to do,
Till, pondering long a chance to find,
At last it came into his mind,
That the King's custom was alway
To rise full early in the day,
And leaving all his men behind
Retirement in the wood to find :
Sometimes he went himself alone,
- 560 Sometimes with one companion.
The traitor purposed there to slay
The King, and to the woods away
Himself, and his two sons would run :
But yet the deed remained undone.
At last, however, on a day
The three together went their way
Unto the secret covert, where
- 568 The King would every morn repair.

- So there they waited out of sight,
Until, when came the morning light,
The Bruce rose from his bed and made
His way towards the covert's shade,
Where those three villains hiding lay,
Who had resolved their King to slay.
No thought of treason crossed his mind :
576 But still his custom was to bind
About his neck a mighty sword,
Which no small help did now afford,
For, had not God, who all commands,
Put trusty weapons in his hands,
He had been slain without a doubt.
With him his chamber page went out :
With no attendant but this one,
584 The King has to the covert gone.
May God to him protection give,
Or else he has short space to live !
That covert whither he was bound
Was hidden by some rising ground,
So that his followers could not see
Where they had gone, his page and he.
He scarce had reached the covert, when
592 All in a row he sees the men
Come running on in stubborn wise.
Then to his page in haste he cries,
" Those men would kill us without ruth.
What weapon hast thou ? " " Sir, in truth
I only have this bolt and bow."
" Give me them both." " Sir, let me know,
Unarmed what part you'd have me play."
600 " Just stand aside, and watch the fray.
If I should get the upper hand,
Thou shalt not want bow, spear, or brand.
Withdraw thee quickly, if I fall."
He spoke these words and that was all,
Then took the bow and keenly scanned
The foes who now were near at hand.
The father had a sword, no more,
608 The next a sword and hand-axe bore,
The third was armed with sword and spear.

“Traitor,” the King cried, “come not near,”
For by their bearing well he knew
That what he’d heard of them was true.

“Stand back,” he cried, “Be not so bold,
For well I know whom thou hast sold.”

“Ah, sir, bethink you now,” said he,

616 “How near to you I ought to be.

Who should be near to you but I?”

The King replied “Assuredly

I will not have thee come more near.

What thou wilt say from thence, I hear.”

But followed by his sons, the man

With guileful words still forward ran.

When the King saw he would not stay,

624 But, uttering lies, kept on his way,

He drew the arrow, and let fly,

And shot it through the father’s eye

So that the weapon pierced his brain,

And backwards fell the traitor slain.

The brother who the hand-axe bare,

Seeing his father fallen there,

Attempted to strike down the King,

632 And gave his axe a deadly swing.

But he, with sword uplifted high,

Struck with great force the enemy,

And to the brain his brain-pan clove

And down to earth his body drove.

The third and sole remaining foe,

Seeing his brother’s overthrow,

Eager for vengeance forward stood

640 To slay King Robert if he could.

King Robert, when the man came near,

Watched warily his threatening spear

And struck the point off with his brand.

Then e’er the man could lay his hand

Upon his sword, he dealt a blow

Which clove his skull and laid him low,

His brains all pouring from his head.

648 So when the King saw they were dead

He wiped the blood from off his blade.

The boy came running up, and said,

“ Great praise is due to God in heaven,
Who to your arm such power has given,
That you have by yourself alone,
These three bold traitors overthrown.”

“ So help me God,” the King replied
656 “ They might have with the worthiest vied
In valiant deeds. Now they are slain,
And treason’s lure has been their bane.”

Book VI.

- The King back to his quarters went,
And tidings of his deed were sent
Unto Sir Ingram Umphraville,
Who finding all his evil will
And cunning scheme had come to naught,
Was so much angered that he thought
In Ayr he could no longer stay
8 And to Sir Aymer went his way,
To tell him how his plot did fail.
Sir Aymer wondered at the tale
Of how one warrior's peerless might
Against great odds had won the fight,
As then the King had done when he
Had vengeance wreaked on traitors three.
"By heaven," he said, "I know to-day
16 That to be true which wise men say,
For how good fortune helps the bold
Is shown well by the tale you've told.
Had Bruce not been exceeding brave,
How could he have contrived to save
His life in such extremity ?
I fear now that his courage high,
And prowess will such deeds achieve
24 As none were willing to believe."
- Meanwhile the King, of whom they spake,
Uncertain where his rest to take,
Wandered in Carrick here and there.
Most of his followers scattered were
To get whate'er they needed most
Or reconnoitre all the coast ;
Scarce sixty with the King did stay.
32 Now when the men of Galloway
Knew that thus scattered were his men,
They secretly assembled then
A force more than two hundred strong ;
A bloodhound too they led along.

- They hoped King Robert to surprise,
And thought that, if in any wise
He should escape their first attack,
40 The hound would follow up his track.
One evening this Galwegian band
To steal upon King Robert planned,
And to him straight they held their way,
But he, who had his watchers aye
On every side, their coming knew
A long time ere they came in view,
And, since their number was so great,
48 He thought it better not to wait,
But, as the night drew on apace,
Withdrew his men from out the place,
For in the darkling night the foe
Could hardly all the distance go
Ere he his men had safely hid :
And even as he thought he did.

- His band of followers he took
56 To a morass across a brook,
And therewithin for them he found
A very narrow piece of ground
Two bowshots from the water-side.
“ Here,” said he “ ye may safe abide,
And take your rest a while and lie,
While I myself go back and spy
Whether the foe are coming near,
64 And, should I of their coming hear,
I’ll give you warning, so that we
May not at disadvantage be.”

- The King returned then to the brook
And with him servants two he took,
Bilding Sir Gilbert de la Hay
Behind with the main body stay.
In haste he to the water went
72 And there with heart and ear intent
He listened every sound to hear :
But no sound yet came to his ear.
Pacing along the stream he tried
To see whate’er might be descried :
He saw the banks were steep to climb,

The river flowed through beds of slime :
No other ford he could discover

- 80 Except the one they had passed over.
So narrow was the passage through,
It was not broad enough for two ;
However close together pressed,
Two could not get to land abreast.
King Robert gave his men command
That they should now rejoin the band,
For he would on the outlook be.

- 88 “ Sir,” said they, “ Who shall with you be ? ”
“ God,” he replied, “ and none beside,
I will not have you here abide.”

So they obeyed the King’s command
And there alone he took his stand.
He had no long time waited there
Before his ear became aware
Of what seemed like a whistling hound,

- 96 And near and nearer came the sound.
Standing quite motionless he strained
His ear, and, while he there remained,
The sound appeared to come his way,
So that he must still longer stay
To learn the meaning of the sound,
Since for the whistling of a hound
He would not wake his company.
104 Therefore he would abide and see
What folk they were, and whether they
In his direction held their way,
Or in the distance would pass by.
The moon was shining in the sky ;
He stood so long that he could hear
The sound of footsteps coming near,
And sent his two attendants then
112 To wake his comrades in the fen ;
So his two servants went their way
And left the King alone to stay.

So long intent he there did stand,
That at the last came near at hand
The whole collection of his foes.
Then in his mind the thought arose

- That, if he went to fetch his men,
 120 Before he could return again,
 His foes would all have crossed the stream.
 Thus no choice had he, as would seem,
 Except to flee or else to die.
 But his stout heart and courage high
 Counsell'd him there alone to bide
 And face them at the water-side
 And guard the ford. As he was armed
 128 In proof, he could not well be harmed
 By all the arrows of the foe,
 And by great deeds of derring-do
 He might their hearts with terror stun,
 Since they must meet him one by one.
 He did as his high spirit bade,
 And matchless courage surely had,
 When trusting to the vantage slight
 136 The place afforded him that night,
 He would encounter at the ford,
 Two hundred men with single sword.
 The foe upon the other side,
 Thus by a single man defied,
 Eagerly rode into the stream,
 And did not of disaster dream.
 The first assailant to appear
 144 Was smit so hard by Bruce's spear,
 That, conquered by the grisly wound,
 He fell upon the earth and swooned.
 The rest rode wildly on in force,
 But found across their upward course
 The horse of him who first did go.
 When Bruce observed that it was so
 He stabbed the horse, which gave a bound
 152 And fell there, lifeless on the ground.
 Therewith the rest came with a shout ;
 The King, whose heart was wondrous stout,
 Engaged them on the rising ground,
 And they such hot reception found
 That five men in the ford he slew,
 On which the rest some way withdrew,
 For even the boldest of his foes

- 160 Shrank from King Robert's heavy blows.
Then one said, " Surely we are slack :
What shall we say when we go back,
If one man thus two hundred face ?
Had ever men such foul disgrace
As ours is, if we go away ? "
With that a furious shout gave they
And cried out, " On him ! He can't last."
- 168 With that they pressed on him so fast,
That, but for his heroic power,
He had been slain that very hour.
But he maintained his post so well,
That those on whom his sword-edge fell
Could not his deadly onslaught face,
And so within a little space
The narrow path could scarce contain
- 176 The crowd of men and horses slain,
And, stumbling o'er their dead, the foe
In vain attempted up to go.
Oh heaven, whoso had been thereby
And seen how he thus valiantly
Maintained the fight against them all,
I well believe they would him call
The greatest warrior of his day,
- 184 And, if myself the truth may say,
I never heard that hero old
So many foes in check did hold.
Long since by Polynices sent
Thedeus to Thebes, the city, went
To bid the King Eteocles
His own twin brother's wrath appease
By letting him a twelvemonth rule
- 192 And hold his natal right in full :
For, as the minds of both were set
Upon the crown, the barons, met
In council, made them both agree
To rule as kings alternately.
Each brother was to reign a year,
Nor might the other one appear
In Thebes, until the first alone
- 200 Had held for one whole year the throne ;

- But, when the year was quite complete,
 He might ascend the royal seat,
 While in his turn the other went
 To pass a year in banishment.
 To Thebes went Thedeus to exact
 The carrying out of this compact,
 And, there arrived, so well he spake
 208 For absent Polynices' sake,
 That Eteocles, who King was then,
 His captain sent with fifty men
 Well armed and told them to waylay
 Stout Thedeus on his homeward way.
 Forth went the captain in command,
 Himself the fiftieth, of a band
 Of Thebans nine and forty strong.
 216 Concealed by night they went along
 Their ambush in a pass to lay,
 That they might kill him on his way.
 'Twixt cliff and sea must Thedeus go
 Along this pass, nor did he know
 Aught of their treacherous intent
 As towards his home in Greece he went.
 But when he rode into the night,
 224 He noticed how the clear moonlight
 Came flashing back from armour sheen,
 And wondered what it all might mean.
 With that the Thebans raised a cry,
 And he, who heard so suddenly
 So many voices, was appalled—
 But not for long. He soon recalled
 His wonted courage, for his heart
 232 Defying danger played its part
 Most nobly in the hour of need,
 So that he spurred his gallant steed,
 And charged at once among them all
 Making his first opponent fall.
 Then from the sheath his sword he drew
 And six or seven Thebans slew,
 Dealing his heavy blows amain
 240 Till under him his steed was slain.
 But leaping lightly from the ground

- His sword soon cleared a space around,
And took the lives of many more,
Though he himself was wounded sore.
He then perceived a path that led
To the cliff's summit overhead.
Thither he turned his steps with speed,
248 Of his assailants taking heed
Till, climbing up some way, he found
Upon the cliff a vantage ground,
Where one by one he could them slay :
So there he turned and stood at bay.
After him came the hostile rout,
And oftentimes it so fell out,
That one man whom he back did drive
256 Would bear down with him four or five.
His stronghold he defended well
Till more than half his foemen fell.
A mass of rock the pathway near
Chanced to have lain for many a year,
And now was tottering to its fall,
Which, when he saw them coming all,
He tumbled on their heads. Its weight
264 Killed of his foemen seven or eight,
And filled the rest with great dismay,
So that they almost ran away.
The deus on the defensive stayed
No longer, but with naked blade
Forth rushing hewed with might and main
Till nine and forty men were slain.
The captain, now his only foe,
272 He spared, but made him swear to go
To King Eteocles and tell
What hard adventure them befell.
Thus one man fifty overcame
And by his valour won great fame.
Consider ye who read this story
Which of the two deserves more glory,
The King, who by his wisdom planned
280 To bring two hundred to a stand,
And single-handed could oppose
Triumphantly so many foes,

- Or Thedeus, who, when unawares
 He was entrapped in hostile snares,
 All his assailants overthrew
 And nine and forty warriors slew.
 Both did their exploits in the night
 288 Under the moon's uncertain light ;
 King Robert foiled the larger band,
 But more were killed by Thedeus' hand ;
 It rests with you to judge aright
 Which of the two showed greater might.
 So in the manner I have told
 The King that was so strong and bold,
 Was fighting at the ford his foes,
 296 Giving and taking heavy blows,
 Till with the victims of his sword
 He blocked the passage of the ford,
 That no one over it could ride.
 Then seemed it folly to abide :
 So in despair they left the fight
 And homeward turning took to flight.
 By this the King's men sleeping near,
 304 Hearing the cries, awoke in fear,
 And hurried fast their lord to aid.
 The men of Galloway dismayed
 Fled, for they durst no longer there
 Abide. The King's men anxious were
 For fear their lord had come to harm,
 And to the ford in great alarm
 They hastened. There the King they found
 312 Sitting alone upon the ground
 Unhelmeted to breathe the air,
 And, when they asked how he did fare,
 He told them freely all the tale,
 How many came him to assail,
 And how from God such grace he found,
 That they beheld him safe and sound.
 Looking to see how many lay
 320 There dead, they found along the way
 Fourteen men whom the King had slain,
 And praised God who o'er all does reign,
 Seeing their master safe and sound,

- And said, " We surely have no ground
To fear our foes, since here we have
A chief so puissant and brave,
That he for our protection chose
328 To fight against so many foes."
In words like these the King they praised
And to the sky his valour raised.
All who his leal companions were,
How they rejoiced to see him there !
Valour is most of noble things
Loved for the honour that it brings,
When well maintained by strength of will,
336 For oft the journey is uphill
That leads men to a glorious end.
You often must attack, defend,
And be in all your conduct wise,
If you would win fair honour's prize ;
But honour quickly takes to flight,
Unless you steer your course aright,
Know what to leave and what to do.
344 Valour's a mean betwixt these two,
Base cowardice and the excess,
Which may be called foolhardiness ;
Both these extremes we must forsake.
Foolhardiness will undertake
Deeds that were better left undone :
But cowardice will make us shun
Those deeds we surely ought to do,
352 All which can only happen to
Those who for folly are to blame.
Therefore has valour such high fame,
Because it lies 'twixt two extremes
And undertakes what fitting seems
And leaves what should be left : and hence
It must be well supplied with sense,
That it may every pe'il know
360 And whence advantages may flow.
It always would with boldness be,
If boldness were from folly free.
Boldness by folly led is blind,
But boldness, if it be combined

With sense, is valour : with good sense
True valour never can dispense.

This noble King of whom we tell

- 368 Combined good sense with boldness well,
As from this combat plain may be,
For by his shrewdness he could see,
So narrow was the passage and
The steep ascent that led to land,
They might be held by one strong man.
His valour then approved the plan,
Since only one by one the foe

- 376 Could forward to the combat go.
Thus boldness with good sense allied,
Working together side by side,
Gave the King valour's glorious prize,
And triumph o'er his enemies.

The King in Carrick still did bide :
His friends, from all the countryside,
Gathered around him when 'twas known

- 384 How many foes he had o'erthrown,
For they would now his fortunes share
If he again in danger were.

To Douglas now returns my tale
Who sojourned still in Douglasdale,
Or in some place not far away
Securely in concealment lay,
Watching his castle-gate to know

- 392 The movements of the English foe,
And at great risk he sometimes tried
To find if they would come outside.
When he perceived without a doubt,
That they would willingly come out,
He summoned to his side each friend
On whose good faith he could depend.
They mustered strong enough to fight
400 Against Thirlwall, and all the might
Of those who in the castle were.

Then secretly he did repair
To Sandylands, that near thereby
His followers might in ambush lie.
He found some men a trap to make,

- Who, when the morning came, should take
 Kine feeding by the castle wall
 408 And openly should drive them all
 To where the Scottish ambush lay.
 Then Thirlwall did his men array
 As quickly as he could, and all
 He led outside the castle wall
 To follow up the stolen kine.
 Armed at all points in armour fine
 He was, but that his head was bare.
 416 Then with the men that with him were
 After the cattle forth he sped,
 Like one that had of nothing dread,
 Until of them he got a sight.
 Then spurred they on with all their might,
 Urging the chase in disarray :
 The others fled before, till they
 The place of ambuscade had passed,
 424 But Thirlwall still pursued them fast.
 Then from their place of ambush all
 The Scottish party great and small,
 Rushed out and raised the battle cry.
 The English, seeing suddenly
 So many valiant men appear,
 Ready to take them in the rear
 And cut them off, were much afraid,
 432 And as they all were disarrayed,
 Some stood their ground, some had recourse
 To flight, when Douglas with his force
 Upon them made a fierce attack,
 That scattered them and drove them back,
 And in a short time so prevailed
 That few escaped whom he assailed.
 Thirlwall the captain, who had led
 440 The English company, fell dead,
 And most of those with him that day :
 The rest lost heart, and rode away.
 Douglas the remnant hotly chased,
 Who, raving on in headlong haste,
 Towards the castle made their way.
 The first rushed in without delay,

But the pursuers came so fast,
448 That they o'ertook some at the last,
And would not any mercy show.
But, when those in the castle so
Beheld their comrades slain outside,
In haste to bar the gates they hied,
And then the castle gates they mann'd,
Ere Douglas came up with his band,
And all the English soldiers bound,
456 Who were outside the castle found,
And to his refuge went away :
Thus ended Thirlwall's quest that day.

When Thirlwall and his men had fared
In such a way as I've declared,
Sir James of Douglas and his men
Assembled all together then
And went away to aid the King,
464 For messengers did tidings bring
That at this time Sir Amery,
De Valence and much chivalry
Of English and of Scottish men
With fell intent were ready then
Assembled, to attack the King,
Who had now with his following
Retired to Cumnock's narrow vale.
472 So thither out of Douglasdale
To the King's joy James Douglas went,
And told him that Sir Aymer meant,
Enrolling under his command
Of chivalry a mighty band,
With horn and hound from place to place
Like wolf or robber him to chase.
The King replied, " It well may fall
480 That, though he come, yet after all
We shall not from the country flee :
But when he comes, his face we'll see."

So said King Robert, with a smile.
Sir Aymer de Valence meanwhile
Under his banner had enrolled
Good knights and squires and soldiers bold
From England and from Lothian,

- 488 And he had also many a man,
Eight hundred men, I ween, or more,
All active men and brave, who bore
Arms under John of Lorn's command.
A bloodhound too was in the band
Which nought would from the trail divert
It followed, and, as some assert,
The King himself had brought it up
496 And took such interest in the pup,
That it with his own hand he fed
And it would follow where he led :
Thus the hound came to love him so,
That from his side it would not go.
How John of Lorn, his foeman fell,
Obtained the hound I cannot tell ;
But doubtless it was in his thought
504 That if the hound with him he brought,
He'd take King Robert by its help,
For well he knew the faithful whelp,
Once fairly set upon the trail
Of its old master, would not fail
To follow it for any thing.
This John of Lorn pursued the King
With hatred for his uncle's sake :
512 Could he King Robert slay or take,
And so avenge John Comyn's death,
Not at a straw he'd prize his breath.
The warden then, Sir Amery,
With John of Lorn in company
And other men as warriors famed,
Of whom young Randolph may be named,
Arrived at Cumnock to pursue
520 The King, who of their coming knew
And held a strong position then
Supported by three hundred men.
His brother, Edward Bruce, did ride
With James of Douglas by his side.
He turned his eyes towards the plain
And saw Sir Aymer there remain
With the main body of his foes,
528 And, as he never did suppose

Their number more than he saw there,
 Looked in that quarter, not elsewhere ;
 And thus it was he did not know
 That John of Lorn, his cunning foe,
 Thought to attack him in the rear
 And aye stole nearer and more near
 By path so hidden from the view,
 536 That no one of his coming knew,
 Until his men were close at hand.

Meantime Sir Aymer and his band
 Came on in front in close array.
 The King was in great jeopardy,
 Beset in front and rear by those
 Who sought his life, his deadly foes
 Divided now, but either band
 544 Outnumbered far his small command.
 When the good King his danger knew,
 He soon determined what to do,
 And said, " My friends, we have not might
 Enough to stand and offer fight.
 Therefore, let us divide in three,
 Lest all our troop surrounded be ;
 Three different courses we must hold."
 552 His trusty counsellors he told
 Where the three separate bands should meet
 After effecting their retreat.
 So there they made no longer stay,
 But in three bodies went away.

When John of Lorn came to the place,
 He set the hound on Bruce's trace.
 The faithful dog without delay
 560 After King Robert held its way,
 Following his troop as straight as though
 He saw the King before him go.
 When thus the hound came on apace
 Ne'er swerving from King Robert's trace,
 He saw the beast knew him too well,
 And thought it best his troop to tell
 To go thence in three separate bands ;
 568 Forthwith they followed his commands.
 But, though they thus divided went,

The hound ne'er lost the monarch's scent,
 And, guided by unerring skill,
 Followed upon his footsteps still.
 When the King saw that all the force
 Of his pursuers held their course
 Straight after him and him alone,

- 576 He soon perceived that it was known
 Which band he went in. So he bade
 In haste the followers, whom he had
 Around him still, to go away
 Each by himself and so did they.

All now have gone their separate ways,
 And only one man with him stays,
 His foster brother, and those two

- 584 In company their course pursue.
 The hound, still following the scent,
 No notice took of those who went
 Apart, but, turning left nor right.
 Traced eagerly King Robert's flight.
 When John of Lorn the bloodhound saw
 Follow the chase without a flaw,
 And so unerringly pursue

- 592 The footsteps only of those two,
 He knew that one must be the King,
 And chose five of his following,
 Bold active men, who could outpace
 Their swiftest comrades in the race :
 Those men he ordered without fail
 To follow up King Robert's trail.
 They started off without delay

- 600 Their master's order to obey,
 And with such vigour they pursued
 That soon the fugitives they viewed.

When the King saw them close behind,
 He was much troubled in his mind,
 Thinking that, were they bold and strong,
 They might delay his progress long,
 And, while he fought against those five,

- 608 Other pursuers might arrive.
 But, if he only had to do
 With the five men he had in view,

There had been little cause for fear.
Then said he in his comrade's ear
"Those men, I see, are close at hand ;
We soon must face them, brand to brand.
So can I count on help from thee ?

616 For they will soon upon us be."

"Yes," he replied, "all that I can."

"Thou speakest like a valiant man.

I see them coming very near.

I will no further go, but here

Pause to take breath. After a rest

We'll put their prowess to the test."

The King then turned and stoutly faced

624 His five pursuers, who in haste,
With threatening outcry forward spring,
Three of them to attack the King,
While sword in hand the other two
Assail his foster-brother true.

The King attacked the foremost foe

And dealt him such a deadly blow.

That ear and cheek the sword cut through

632 And wounded neck and shoulder too.

The wounded man fell to the ground

And by his fall did so astound

His fellows that they both gave back,

Fearing such champion to attack.

Bruce for a moment looked aside

And saw those others how they tried

To lay his foster-brother low.

640 He leapt aside and aimed a blow

At one of them, whose head he cleft,

And faced again the foes he'd left.

They on him with much fury burst

But such a stroke he dealt the first

That all at once the trenchant glaive

His arm from off the shoulder clave.

What strokes they gave I cannot tell,

648 But to the King it so befell,

That through his matchless courage four

Would see the light of day no more.

The last who did alive remain

Was by the foster brother slain.

Seeing that now of all the five
No single one remained alive,
Bruce to his faithful comrade said—

656 “I thank thee for thy valiant aid.”

“Sir, though it please you so to say,
You bore the burden of the fray;
Four of the five by your sword died.”

“As the game went,” the King replied,

“I was less hardly pressed, and so
Had time to deal an extra blow,
For the two men who dealt with thee,

664 When they saw me assailed by three,

On my side had not any dread,
Thinking I was too sore bestead.

So, as I caused them no alarm,
I could do all the greater harm.”

With that the King lifts up his eyes
And not far off the hound espies
Followed by Lorn’s whole company

672 And to a wood, that lay hard by,

He and his comrade sped apace:

God in His mercy grant them grace!

Book VII.

- The King is gone towards the wood
Worn out with toil and dazed of mood,
And presently his way he made
To where beneath the woodland shade
Along a valley flowed a brook :
Thither in haste his way he took
And, falling down to rest him there,
8 Declared he could no further fare.
“ Sir,” said his man, “ that may not be.
Abide here, and you soon shall see
Five hundred thirsting for your blood,
By us two scarce to be withstood :
So since we cannot win by force,
We must to cunning have recourse.”
The King said, “ Since thou wilt it so,
16 Go forth and I will with thee go.
But I have often heard it said,
That, if one through the water wade
An arrow’s flight, a hound will fail
To follow further on the trail,
Which first his master set him to ;
Now let us try if that be true,
For, were that devil’s hound thrown out,
24 We need not fear the rabble rout.”
So then to carry out this scheme,
They entered quickly in the stream :
Then, wading downward unespied,
They landed on the other side,
And, as before, held on their way.
Now, John of Lorn, with no delay
Came presently with all his train
32 Where his retainers five were slain.
At such a sight lamenting sore,
He stood a while and then he swore
To avenge their blood he’d not be slow :
But otherwise the game did go.

- There would he now no longer bide,
But on in hot pursuit he hied,
On to the burn without a halt :
- 40 Where now the bloodhound was at fault,
Wavering a long time to and fro,
As if in doubt which way to go.
Thus Lorn to his displeasure found
The slot was hidden from the hound.
“ Our toil,” he said, “ is thrown away,
We need not further go this day :
The forest is both broad and wide ;
- 48 Ere this he’s reached the other side.
And so we may our steps retrace
And urge no more a fruitless chase.”
With this he summoned all his men
And to the army turned again.
Thus got the noble King away
From deadly foes ; but others say
His safety he did not achieve
- 56 By dint of wading ; they believe
That, when he was in desperate plight,
He owed his life to bowman’s sleight,
That, when his foes the King pursued,
There ran with him an archer good,
Till they into the wood were gone.
This man said to himself alone,
That he would in the forest stay
- 64 And do his best the hound to slay ;
For, while the hound remained alive,
He knew full well that they would drive
The ruthless chase, till Bruce was ta’en
And by his cruel foemen slain.
As he would every peril brave
His lord and master’s life to save,
Behind a bush he took his stand,
- 72 Until the hound was close at hand,
And with an arrow soon him slew
And through the wood himself withdrew.
But whether Bruce’s flight befell
As I told first or now I tell,
I cannot say, but this I know

- That at the brook he balked the foe.
 The King proceeded on his way,
 80 Nor did Lorn any longer stay,
 But joined Sir Aymer at the place,
 Where, on returning from the chase,
 His men perceived that they were foiled :
 For though with eager zeal they toiled
 In the pursuit, their gain was small,
 Their foes were scathless nearly all.
 Sir Thomas Randolph (so men say)
 88 Took Bruce's banner on that day,
 And from King Edward for that deed
 In England won both praise and meed.
 When the pursuers mustered were
 And John of Lorn had met them there,
 He told Sir Aymer how it fell
 The chase had not succeeded well,
 And how the King his five men slew
 96 And after to the wood withdrew.
 Sir Aymer heard the story told
 And, wondering at a deed so bold,
 He crossed himself, and said, " Full high
 I honour Bruce. For who could vie
 With him in facing danger's hour ?
 He would be hard to overpower,
 If one should meet him in fair field."
 104 Sir Aymer thus his thought revealed.
 Meantime the good King held his way,
 He and his servant until they
 Had passed beyond the forest bound,
 And stretching far before them found
 A moorland tract both long and broad.
 Ere half the distance they have trod,
 Three men approaching them they see,
 112 Who lawless scoundrels seem to be.
 With swords and axes armed they were
 And one across his shoulders bare
 A well-grown wether : such were they
 Who met King Robert on his way.
 The King received their greeting well
 And then requested them to tell

In what direction they were bound.

- 120 They answered, " Could the Bruce be found,
They gladly would with him abide,
For him they sought." The Bruce replied
" If that is so, then follow me.
And Robert Bruce ye soon shall see."

- By his high bearing and his tone
Of voice the King was quickly known.
Startled at this surprise, their mien
128 Was changed from what it first had been.
For they were treacherous foes, and lay
In wait King Robert to betray,
And therefore they would with him dwell
Till they could do their business well.
So they agreed at once to what
The King proposed, but he their plot
Had shrewdly guessed and well he knew
136 That they were not his liegemen true.

- " Fellows," he said, " all three, ye must,
Till we can one another trust,
Before us on the way proceed,
And we shall follow as you lead,
Not far behind." " Sir," they reply,
" We do not see the reason why
You should suspect we mean you ill."
144 " Nevertheless," said Bruce, " I will
That now ye thus before us go
Till we each other better know."
Then to his will they gave consent
And forward on their way they went.

- Thus sped they on till day was past,
And then the foremost reached at last
A farmer's empty house, and there
152 They killed the wether that they bare,
Kindled a fire to roast the meat,
And asked the King if he would eat,
And rest him, while they cooked the food.
The King, whose appetite was good,
Agreed at once to what they said,
And but one stipulation made.
He only said, "'Tis my desire

- 160 I and my man should have one fire
On this side, at the other you,"
And they consented so to do.
So to the house's end they went,
And half the wether to him sent.
Without delay they cooked the meat,
And greedily began to eat.
The King, who long had fasting been,
168 Fell to the feast with hunger keen.
After his toil through moor and wood
Eager he was to eat some food.
He ate with haste, and felt a strong
Desire for sleep he could not long
Resist : for, when one's full of food,
The spirit is to sleep subdued,
By heaviness of flesh oppressed.
176 The monarch badly needed rest,
Worn out by heavy toil that day,
Which made him to his vassal say
"Can I trust thee to keep awake
While I a little slumber take ?"
"Yea, sire," he said. "At least I'll try
My best." The King with winking eye
Lay half awake, and never fast
184 Asleep, but sudden glances cast
Suspiciously at those three men,
Who by the other fire sat then.
Full well he knew their treachery
And therefore slept like fowl on tree.
While thus the King had little rest,
His man, with drowsiness oppressed,
Retained not long his power of sight,
192 But fell asleep and snored outright.
Now is the King in peril great,
For certain death will be his fate,
Unless his weary eyes uncloze.
As soon as e'er his treacherous foes
Perceive him and his man asleep,
Up on their feet in haste they leap,
And, rushing on with weapons bare
200 Uplifted, made their way to where

- The King was sleeping. They intended
 To kill him ere that sleep was ended.
 The King awoke. With sudden glance
 He saw the traitors three advance,
 While on the ground his man was sleeping.
 With active spring from earth upleaping,
 He drew his sword and faced the foe,
 208 And at the same time with his toe
 Pushed hard his sleeping man, who raised
 His head, but was with sleep still dazed,
 For drowsiness his senses bound
 So fast, that ere his feet he found,
 At unawares a deadly blow
 Laid Bruce's foster-brother low.
 So he could help his lord no more,
 216 His lord, who ne'er had been before
 In all his life so sore bestead,
 Would have been numbered with the dead,
 But for the armour that he wore.
 And now so valiantly he bore
 Himself against such heavy odds,
 That through his manhood and through God's
 Assistance all three did he slay :
 224 But dead his foster-brother lay.
 Then, half distracted in his mind
 Himself thus left alone to find,
 His foster brother he lamented,
 And on the others curses vented ;
 Then took his solitary way
 To where the place of meeting lay.
 The Bruce's heart with anger burned
 232 And for his comrade deeply mourned,
 As all alone his way he made
 Straight for the house where he had said
 That he would keep tryst with his men ;
 The night was far advanced by then,
 When he came to the house whereat
 They were to meet. The goodwife sat
 Upon the bench, and asked him who
 240 He was, and what he had to do.
 " I've travelled far," he said, " good dame,

And in my travels hither came."

"One traveller is to me so dear,"

She said, "that all I welcome here."

"Good dame," he said, "what man is he,

That makes thy heart so tender be

To all who travel?" Said the dame,

248 "I'm not ashamed to tell his name,

For good King Robert Bruce is he,

Who should the King of Scotland be.

So far his foes have proved too strong,

But I have hopes to see ere long

Him lord and king of all the land,

So that no foes can him withstand."

"Hast thou for Robert Bruce such love?"

256 "Yea, sir, so help me God above."

"Then look and see him close by you,

For I am he." "Can this be true?"

"Lady, it is." "Then where are all

The men who should obey your call?"

"Just now I have no more," said he.

"Nay," cried the dame, "this must not be.

I have two valiant sons and true,

264 Who from this hour shall follow you."

Her stalwart sons without delay

Both swore King Robert to obey

And be his men. Then while he eat

The meat that was before him set,

The Bruce was startled by the sound

Of horses' trampling hooves around

The walls. In haste the door they barred

And armed themselves the house to guard,

272 Till Bruce the face of Douglas knew,

Unclosed the door and let him through,

And all beside who with him were.

His brother Edward Bruce was there

And good Sir James of Douglas, who,

Escaped from the pursuers' crew,

Had the King's brother chanced upon,

280 And with him to the tryst had gone:

There went they with their train along,

Some fifty and a hundred strong.

Then all assembled in the place,
Rejoiced to see King Robert's face,
And heard with wonder all his toil,
And how he gave his foes the foil ;
How the five men pursued him fast,
288 And how he through the water passed,
And how he met the robbers three,
By whom in sleep he was to be
Murdered, but by God's grace he woke.
Then of his comrade's death he spoke
And so the wondrous story ended,
Of how God had his life defended.
They praised God humbly for His grace
296 And talked together for a space.

At length the King went on to say,
" Fortune has pressed us hard to-day,
And suddenly dispersed were we.
Our foes no doubt from fear are free,
Because they think us broken so
And worn with wandering to and fro,
That many days must pass before
304 We can unite our bands once more.
To-night in careless ease they'll lie,
As if no enemy were nigh.
Knew we but where their army lies
And came upon them by surprise,
We might inflict upon the foe
At little risk a heavy blow." .

" My liege," Sir James of Douglas said,
312 ' As I my troopers hither led,
We came so near their camp that I
Can quickly bring you where they lie ;
And would you hasten, ere 'tis day
It may so happen that you may
Do them more harm in a short space
Than they did us in all the chase,
For scattered here and there they rest,"
320 Then thought they all it would be best
To go against them in great haste
And by delay no moment waste.

So quick they sped, that when 'twas light

- The hostile camp appeared in sight.
 One party in the town that lay
 Were farther than a mile away
 From the main body : there, 'tis said,
 328 Two thousand men themselves had laid.
 With his bold warriors at his back
 The King moved on to the attack.
 The foe aroused and struck with fear,
 Raised clamours horrible to hear,
 And others, who had heard the shout
 Of those attacked, came rushing out ;
 Many unarmed (so great the scare)
 336 Went blindly running here and there.
 Those, who came out with arms, prepared
 To sell life dearly, were not spared.
 Such cruel vengeance then was ta'en,
 That in the town two-thirds were slain
 Of those who there had gone to bed :
 The rest to the main body fled,
 Who hearing all the noise and cries,
 344 Seeing them come in wretched guise,
 Some clad in nothing but a shirt,
 Some badly wounded, some unhurt,
 Of what was coming sore afraid,
 Around their banners stood arrayed.
 The King, when in the morning light
 He saw the host prepared to fight,
 Then would not risk a rash attack,
 352 But called his men to safety back,
 Who very soon assembled round.
 Now when Sir Amery had found,
 How Bruce from flight had turned again,
 And in the town had many slain,
 He said, " By this we clearly see
 That noble hearts, where'er they be,
 Are hard to overcome by force.
 360 The heart that springs from noble source
 Is strongest when opposed to strength,
 And without doubt must prove at length
 Triumphant over every foe,
 Unless the body be laid low.

Good proof of this we now have seen ;
Robert the Bruce we thought had been
So crushed that none could entertain
368 The thought that he would rise again,
Resolved with dauntless heart and will
To face the blows of fortune still ;
For he seemed utterly o'erthrown,
Deserted, wandering all alone.
Since day by day he was hard pressed
By foes who never gave him rest,
'T s passing strange he rather chose
376 More toil and battle than repose ;
Such lion-hearted men as he
Can never wholly vanquished be."

In this wise spoke Sir Amery,
And when they of his company
Saw that their labour had been vain
And how the King their men had slain
And still preserved his liberty,
384 They thought that it would foolish be
To stay and further efforts make,
Seeing the King they could not take.
On hearing this Sir Amery
Made up his mind right hast'ly,
That he would journey to Carlisle
And in that town abide a while,
Appointing spies to watch the King
392 And of his movements tidings bring :
When fortune offered him a chance,
He would with all his force advance
Against King Robert suddenly.
Therefore with all his company
Sir Amery to England rode
And each man sought his own abode.
In haste to Carlisle did he ride
400 And there determined to abide
Till fortune favoured him once more.

Meantime, the King on Carrick shore
Remained at large, and now and then
Would go a-hunting with his men.
It happened as the time went by

- That once the King resolved to try
 What game within the forest lay.
- 408 Now, as it chanced, upon that day
 Two hunting dogs beside him ran,
 But of his train he took no man.
 His trusty sword with him he bore,
 As was his wont, and thus before
 The wood he sat in wait for game,
 When swiftly from the wood there came
 Three men towards him, bow in hand :
- 416 The King failed not to understand
 Both by the way they held their bows
 And by their bearing they were foes.
 He rose up quickly from the ground
 And from the leash slipped either hound.
 May God in heaven King Robert save !
 For if he were not wise and brave,
 His case must desperate appear,
- 424 For those three men who now came near
 Were all inspired with dead y hate,
 And for the King had lain in wait
 So eagerly in hope to take
 Vengeance for John the Comyn's sake.
 Now seeing him alone they thought
 Fortune a lucky chance had brought
 And they the King might quickly slay,
- 432 And, if they then could get away,
 To shelter in the forest near,
 They deemed there would be little fear
 Of all his followers' pursuit.
- So now with bows prepared to shoot
 Towards the King in haste they went,
 Who, seeing bows against him bent,
 Much feared that, as he was unarmed,
- 440 He might be by their arrows harmed.
 " Ye ought to be ashamed," said he,
 " Since I am one and ye are three,
 To try to shoot me from afar.
 Now, if ye men of valour are,
 Come draw your swords and let us try
 Whether you three can win or I,

And so you will more honoured be.”

- 448 “By heaven,” replied one of the three,
 ‘No one shall say we eared thy brand
 And would not meet thee hand to hand.”
 With that they cast their bows away
 And rushed on him without delay.
 Boldly King Robert faced his foes
 And dealt the first such mighty blows,
 That he fell dead upon the green.
- 456 Now when the nearest hound had seen
 Those traitors set upon the King,
 At one he made a sudden spring ;
 Catching him by the throat, the hound
 Soon dragged him headlong to the ground.
 The King, whose sword was lifted high,
 Right glad to find a strong ally,
 Before the man could rise again,
- 464 Dealt such a blow with might and main
 That in a trice he broke his back.
 The third to come to the attack,
 When thus he saw his comrades slain,
 Turned quickly to the wood again.
 Although the King at once gave chase,
 His hound outstripped him in the race,
 Which, when it saw the man take flight,
- 472 Rushed on and gripped his neck so tight
 That he fell down upon the ground.
 The King soon came to aid the hound,
 And as from earth the traitor tried
 To rise, by Bruce’s sword he died.

- The King’s attendants on that day,
 Who chanced to be not far away
 When thus they saw their lord waylaid
- 480 Ran speedily to give their aid,
 And asked him how it all befell.
 When he did all the story tell
 Of how he was assailed by three
 “By heaven,” they said, “we well may see
 That no one but a champion stout
 Should challenge you to such a bout,
 Who with your sword have slain those three

- 488 And not been wounded." "Nay," said he,
 "In truth but one of them I slew,
 God and my hound the other two.
 More valiant men I would not seek,
 But trait'rous conscience made them weak.
 Thus having by God's mercy brought
 The malice of his foes to nought,
 He blew his horn, that all around
 496 His trusty men might hear the sound,
 Then quickly homewards went his way,
 For he would hunt no more that day.
 Some time about Loch Trool he stayed,
 And hunting expeditions made
 To get good venison for his men,
 For 'twas the hunting season then.

With many a famous knight meanwhile

- 504 Sir Amery was in Carlisle,
 Biding his time until he heard,
 It was by messengers averred,
 That our good King his ease did take
 Hunting the deer around the lake.
 He thought then with his chivalry
 To fall upon him suddenly
 From Carlisle in the darkness riding,
 512 And through the day in covert bidding :
 He hoped by marching in this wise
 He better might the King surprise.
 To fight beneath his banner came
 Esquires and knights well-known to fame
 With many Scotch and English men,
 Who westward marched together then,
 And through the nights their way pursued
 520 Until at last they reached the wood
 Within Glen Trool's recesses, where
 The King was staying, unaware
 That near and nearer hour by hour
 Approached Sir Aymer's mighty power.
 No arm can save him now but God's,
 For six to one is fearful odds.

When thus Sir Aymer, as I'm told,

- 528 With all his men so stout and bold

Was come so near the King, that they
 Were but a mile from him away,
 He asked for counsel from his men,
 What they should do as things were then.
 The King, he told them, held a post
 So narrow that no mounted host
 Could venture to assail him there,

536 And, if a mounted band should dare
 Assail the camp with Bruce within,
 The battle would be hard to win.
 "Therefore," he said, "I recommend
 That we should to his quarters send
 A woman wretchedly attired,
 As if she gifts of alms required,
 Who there may cunningly espy

544 In what array their forces lie.
 Meanwhile on foot with all our force
 We must in silence hold our course
 Arrayed for battle through the wood,
 And if, by fortune's grace, we should
 Hide to the last our coming near,
 We need not much resistance fear."

They thought such counsel to be good
 552 And sent with all the speed they could
 The woman chosen for their spy,
 And she at once went speedily
 To where the King, with ne'er a fear
 Of any foe approaching near,
 Went all unarmed and free from care.

Yet when he saw the woman there,
 A stranger's face, whom no one knew,
 560 He watched her and suspicious grew
 That she came for no purpose good,
 Not, as she feigned, to beg for food.
 So she was seized and soon was fain,
 For fear that else she might be slain,
 To tell them how Sir Amery
 With Clifford in his company
 And levies from Northumberland

568 In battle order were at hand.
 On hearing what she had to say

- The King put on without delay
 His armour, and at his command
 Appeared before him all his band,
 (I trow three hundred strong they were)
 And when they all had mustered there,
 At once his banner he displayed
 576 And round it all his men arrayed.
 They had no long time waiting stood,
 Before through the surrounding wood
 They saw the Englishmen appear
 Marching on foot with levelled spear.
 Mightily onward came the foes
 And soon loud battle shouts arose,
 For the good King stepped forth in front
 584 And of the fighting bore the brunt.
 A bow and arrow from the hand
 Of one who did beside him stand
 He took, and, shooting with it, smote
 The foremost foeman in the throat :
 The arrow through his windpipe sped,
 And on the ground the man lay dead.
 Their foremost warrior's sudden fall
 592 Did much the English host appal.
 Then the King raised his banner high
 And, shouting loud his battle cry,
 Said, " On ! They fail," and with the word
 He swiftly drew his trusty sword,
 And charged the foe so valiantly
 That all those of his company
 Took courage from his bold attack,
 600 And some, who had at first held back,
 Came to the fight again in haste
 And bravely now their foemen faced,
 Till broken was the English van,
 And those who came behind began,
 Soon as they saw their front give way,
 To turn their backs and leave the fray.
 But, ere they from the wood withdrew,
 608 The King some number of them slew,
 Not many, for they fled too fast.
 Fear and surprise made them aghast

When thus the noble King they found
Arrayed in arms to guard the ground,
Which they expected without pain,
By coming unawares, to gain.

So they grew suddenly afraid

616 When fierce assault was on them made,
And quickly hurried back again
Out of the wood into the plain.
For disappointed of their aim,
They had been brought to utter shame ;
Full fifteen hundred men and more
Defeated by as many score
Drew backward in disgraceful rout.

624 And then they wrangled much about
Their base repulse, while of the shame
Each on the other cast the blame.
Lord Clifford quarrelled with de Vaux
Attacking him with word and blow ;
The others into parties split.
Sir Amery, who had more wit,
Could scarce their factious rage restrain,

632 And went to England home again,
Well knowing when such strife arose,
United front against their foes
Could for no long time he maintained.
Therefore with l ttle glory gained,
He back returned to whence he came,
And often thought with bitter shame
How he with many a famous knight

640 Had by so few been put to flight.

Book VIII.

- When thus Sir Aymer left the land,
The King, assembling all his band,
Descended from the higher ground
To over-run the country round,
Because he thought it was but meet
Such good beginning to complete,
And well he knew there was great need
8 Of labour ere he could succeed.
To Kyle he went and all the land
Forced to submit to his command ;
The people there received his peace,
But from his toil he would not cease
Until of Cunningham the best
And greater part his power confessed.
In Bothwell was Sir Aymer now
16 And often thought with angry brow
How those of Cunningham and Kyle,
Who had obedient been erewhile,
Had shaken off the English yoke.
Therefore desire of vengeance woke,
And so Sir Philip Mowbray went
To carry out his stern intent :
A thousand men in his command
24 Marched to regain from Bruce the land.
But Douglas, who by many a spy
Had knowledge of the enemy,
Heard of their coming, and that they
Would pass down Makyrnoky's way.
So he took with him secretly
Those who were of his company,
A band of scarcely sixty men.
32 And posted them within a fen
At Edryfurd, a pass which lay
Where Makyrnoky's narrow way
Has deep morass on either side,
Through which on horseback none can ride.

- At the south end did Douglas wait,
Where the ascent was steep and strait,
And at the northern end the way
40 Was rough as it appears to-day.
There Douglas with his men did go
And set an ambush for the foe,
Where well concealed he could descry
The Mowbray's men ere they came nigh.
They lay in ambush all the night
And, when the sun was shining bright,
They saw for warlike strife arrayed
48 The English van with flags displayed,
Behind which followed in due course
At no great distance the main force.
Out from the ambush no one rose,
Until the foremost of the foes
Had entered in the ford thereby :
Then they rushed forward with a cry
And with sharp swords their foemen clove.
56 Some back into the ford they drove,
While some with arrows barbed were shot,
And their reception was so hot,
That some in flight would safety find,
But found so blocked the way behind,
That, as they struggled back in vain
Within the pass were many slain
For by no other road they might,
64 Than that they came by, leave the fight,
Unless they cut right through their foes,
A path which few among them chose.
The Scots met them so sturdily
And held their ground so valiantly,
That of the Mowbray's force seemed he
The happiest who could fastest flee.
The rearguard, seeing how the van
72 Discomfited in terror ran,
Broke from their ranks, and took to flight.
The Mowbray, that most noble knight,
Who, riding foremost, was the first
Within the Scottish lines to burst,
Seeing how hard he was bestead

- With all his followers slain or fled,
 Roused with the spur his noble horse,
 80 And through the enemy perforce
 Had by his prowess made a way
 Unchallenged, without stop or stay,
 But that one caught him by the hand.
 Then the great horse that would not stand
 Gave a wild bound : his stubborn foe
 Held on and would not let him go,
 Till burst the baldric, and the brand
 88 With belt and all stayed in his hand.
 Without a sword the Mowbray rode
 Out of the press and there abode
 Sometime beholding how apace
 His followers fled and how the place
 Was cleared betwixt him and his men.
 Towards the west he journeyed then ;
 Kilmarnock and Kilwinning past,
 96 He reached Ardrossan town at last,
 Whence through the Largs he made his way
 Till Inverkip before him lay,
 And the strong castle walls which then
 Were strongly manned by Englishmen,
 Who welcomed him with honour great
 And, when they heard their guest relate,
 How he had come so far, although
 104 All men were hostile high and low,
 Loud praised the prowess he had shown
 In riding through the land alone.
 Sir Philip thus his safety gained,
 And James of Douglas there remained,
 Where more than sixty English bled
 And all the rest that foully fled
 To Bothwell soon returned again.
 112 I trow Sir Aymer was not fain,
 When he was told how back they came
 Discomfited and brought to shame.
 But when unto our King was told
 How Douglas, like a captain bold,
 Defeated many men with few,
 Right joyful in his heart he grew,

- And happier were his followers all,
120 For they believed, both great and small,
That, having won such fair success,
They now should fear their foemen less.
Meanwhile the King was staying still
At Galston near by Loudon Hill
The country to his peace to bring.
Sir Aymer and his following,
Hearing how he subdued the land
128 While no one durst his will withstand,
An angry man, I ween, was he
And sent one of his company,
To say that if the Bruce would dare
Come to the plains and meet him there,
He would upon the tenth of May
Near Loudon Hill his host array ;
And if the King to meet him came,
136 It would redound more to his fame,
And he would greater honour gain
By victory on the open plain,
Won by hard blows in even fight,
Than if he skulked on mountain height.

- Those proud words that the envoy spoke
The good King Robert's wrath awoke.
Being thus haughtily defied,
144 In angry spirit he replied,
And to the messenger said he :
" Say to thy lord that, if I be
Alive upon the tenth of May,
I will not wander far away.
Let him to Loudon, if he dare,
And surely he will find me there."
The messenger without delay
152 Back to Sir Aymer went his way,
Taking with him the King's reply.
Sir Aymer's spirits mounted high :
If the King durst come forth to fight,
He thought that, through the greater might
Of all the doughty chivalry
Advancing in his company,
He'd deal the King a deadly blow

- 160 And work his final overthrow.
 The King upon the other side,
 Like captain oft in battle tried,
 Went to survey and choose the ground.
 The road by Loudon Hill he found
 Went through a level plain and dry
 And upon either side thereby
 Stretches of boggy moorland lay,
- 168 But distant from the beaten way
 An arrow's flight on either side,
 Leaving a space that seemed too wide
 For battle with the English horse.
 Therefore he dug across the course
 From both the mosses to the way
 Three lines of ditches, so that they
 Were separate an arrow's flight ;
- 176 The banks were raised to such a height,
 The depth so great that one scarce could
 Surmount them, though no foe withstood.
 The ditches so constructed showed
 Such breadth of space along the road,
 That by the passage side by side
 Five hundred mounted men might ride.
 There thought he to array his men :
- 184 Protected well by ditch and fen,
 Of flank attack he had no fear,
 Nor could the foe assail his rear.
 His men, he knew, could bear the brunt
 Of horsemen charging on their front.
 The barriers that he made were three,
 Because he thought it well might be
 He could not hold the foremost line,
- 192 In which case it was his design
 Back to the second line to go
 Or to the third one, if the foe
 So far prevailed. 'Twas thus he planned.
 And then assembled all his band
 Amounting to six hundred men
 Without the rabble with him then
 Who were perhaps six hundred more.
- 200 With all his force, the night before

The day for battle fixed, he went
To little Loudon where he meant
To watch the coming of the foe,
And, seeing them, he'd march below
With all the speed he could, that he
Might at the dikes before them be.

Aymer de Valence on his side

208 Came forth to war in all the pride
Of chivalry and brought along
A well armed host three thousand strong.
Like noble knight in honour bound
He marched towards the trysting ground,
And when it was the battle day
He hastened on without delay
To where he had agreed to fight.

216 The sun that morn was shining bright
And on his soldiers' armour played :
In squadrons two they were arrayed,
As they proceeded on their way.
The King beheld at break of day
In close array with sword and lance
The foremost hostile band advance,
And in their footsteps following near

224 He saw the second band appear.
Their iron basnets burnished bright
Flashed bravely in the morning light ;
Their spears, their pennons and their shields
With light illumined all the fields ;
Their horses many-coloured were,
F uttered the broidered banners fair ;
Their hauberks white as flowers, the hue
232 Of coats of arms, gules, argent, blue,
Caused them to gitter on the road
Like angels militant of God.

The King said, " Ye may see this hour
How those men trusting to their power,
If they can manage to do so,
In battle fierce will lay us low.

Now, since we know their cruelty,
240 Let us engage them valiantly,
So that the boldest of their host

- May little of our meeting boast,
 For if the foremost gallantly
 Be met, their rear is sure to be
 Daunted and will not firmly stand.
 When we encounter hand to hand,
 We need not fear such odds to face,
 248 For, meeting in that narrow space,
 Our front and theirs must equal be.
 Therefore let each one strive that he
 May by the prowess of his hands
 Do all that noble fame demands.
 Think of the happiness in store
 For us and ours for evermore,
 If we should be victorious here,
 256 For we have no one else to fear
 Through all the kingdom far and wide."
 His warriors standing round replied,
 "We are resolved (God be our stay)
 To quit ourselves like men this day."
 "Then go we forth," the King exclaimed,
 "May He, who all of nothing framed,
 Guide and protect us by his might
 264 And help us to maintain our right."
 Upon the word they march along
 With eager hearts, six hundred strong,
 As gallant band as e'er was seen ;
 But they were all too few, I ween,
 Against such fearful odds to fight,
 Had they not been of matchless might.
 With all his men in good array
 272 The King proceeded on his way,
 In haste his battle line to place
 Along the foremost ditches' space.
 The rabble rout, whose timid hearts
 Were centred in the baggage carts,
 For war and danger disinclined,
 Were left upon the hill behind.
 Meantime Sir Amery has seen
 280 The Scottish warriors stout and keen
 Descending boldly from the hill
 Down to the plain with right good will

- To charge or make a stern defence,
 If any foe would drive them thence.
 Therefore his followers he told
 That they must active be and bold,
 For, if victorious in the fray
 288 They overthrew the foe that day,
 Not only would they fame achieve,
 But also guerdon fair receive.
 By this they had come near the King :
 So without more admonishing,
 He bade his trumpets blow a blast,
 On which his foremost troopers fast
 Braced round their arms their bucklers broad
 296 And on in serried order rode.
 With levelled spears and heads down bent
 Against the King they fiercely went,
 But when in battle clash they closed,
 They were most sturdily opposed ;
 Many brave men upon the ground
 Were dashed, and one might hear the sound
 Of shivered lances and the cry
 304 Of wounded men in agony.
 It was most terrible to hear
 The groans and shouts that met the ear,
 When the best men of either band
 Met spear to spear and hand to hand.
 Ah, mighty God ! who there had been
 And had King Robert's valour seen
 And how Sir Edward by his side
 312 With him in deeds of prowess vied,
 So that their noble chivalry
 Inspired their men with courage high,
 How Douglas too in gallant mood
 Encouraged those who round him stood,
 He would have known these men were fain
 Honour and glory to obtain.
 The men at arms on Bruce's side
 320 Their spears and swords so fiercely plied,
 That from deep wounds in beast and man
 In ruddy streams the life-blood ran.
 The wounded horses kicked and rolled,

- And, rushing wildly uncontrolled,
 The front rank to confusion brought,
 So that the men in clusters fought.
 When the King saw the broken foe
- 328 Disordered wavering to and fro,
 Upon them mighty blows he hailed,
 And with such force their van assailed,
 That many men were overthrown
 And all the plain was thickly strown
 With dead and dying steeds and men,
 For with the King pursuing then
 Well nigh five hundred warriors were
- 336 No wise inclined their foes to spare.
 The Scottish onset was so keen,
 That in short time there might be seen
 Outstretched on earth some hundred slain :
 The remnant that did still remain
 Resolved the quicker to withdraw.
 Those of the rear guard, when they saw
 Their vanguard utterly defeated,
- 344 Without much more ado retreated.
 Ye well may know, that, at the sight
 Of all his men dispersed in flight,
 Oppressed with grief Sir Aymer sighed.
 But yet, however much he tried,
 They all refused to turn again.
 So, when he found his efforts vain,
 He sadly turned his horse's head.
- 352 The King so hard pressed those that fled
 That many he did take or slay :
 The rest to safety made their way.
 In such wise without stop or stay
 Sir Aymer's men fled far away,
 And he himself with sorrow fraught
 In Bothwell castle refuge sought.
 Then, as defeated and disgraced,
- 360 His steps to England he retraced
 Right to the King, and in disgust
 Said that the wardenship he must
 At once resign, nor e'er again,
 Unless 'twas in King Edward's train,

- Across the Scottish bounds he warred,
So much his soul the thought abhorred
That good King Robert in command
368 Of such a small and paltry band
Had overcome and put to flight
In battle pitched his men of might.
Thus our bold King increased his fame
And turned Sir Aymer's pride to shame.
He waited near the battle place,
Till all his men had left the chase.
Then all the prisoners that were made
376 They with them to the hills conveyed,
Grateful to God for all His care.
You might have seen, had you been there,
A folk that merry were and glad
Of their success : then too they had
A lord whose bearing free and face
Showed courtesy and royal grace,
In battle mighty with his sword
384 And aye so ready with a word
Of kindly jest, so wise and shrewd
That all men caught his cheerful mood.
So were they merry without doubt,
And many who dwelt round about,
Seeing the King without their aid
Could help himself, their homage paid.
392 Until he thought that he would go
Over the Grampian hills to see
If any there his friends would be.
Sir Alexander Fraser must
With Simon Fraser be his trust,
For these two men his cousins were.
More friends he badly wanted there,
For he had far too many foemen ;
400 Among them first Sir John the Comyn
And good Sir David, Brechin's lord,
And John the Mowbray drew the sword
With all the men that they could bring
To fight against the noble King ;
And, as he knew they were his foes,
With high resolve he northward goes,

- There to determine if they will
 408 Their haughty threats indeed fulfil.
 The King prepared then to go forth
 Across the Grampians to the north ;
 His brother bold and De la Hay
 Were his companions on the way.
 The Earl of Lennox there did ride,
 Who seldom left King Robert's side,
 And Robert Boyd and many more
 416 Went with the King the Grampians o'er.
 Behind Sir James of Douglas stayed,
 With all the men who him obeyed,
 To see if he could now regain
 From English hands his own domain.
 It was a task with peril fraught,
 But yet so valiantly he wrought
 That by his prowess he did bring
 422 Into submission to the King
 All the tall men of Selkirk wood,
 And his own Douglasdale subdued
 And Gedword Forest too. The man
 Who is so clever that he can
 All Douglas' valiant deeds recount,
 Will find they make a large amount !
 In all his wars, I've heard men say,
 432 But thirteen times he lost the day,
 And seven and fifty times he won.
 War and its toils he ne'er would shun,
 Nor would in idlesse spend his days,
 Wherefore he well deserves our praise.
 James Douglas, when the King went north,
 Most secretly his men led forth ;
 At Douglasdale they soon arrived
 440 Where he a cunning train contrived
 For those who in his castle were.
 An ambush he made ready there,
 And fourteen of his men or more
 He sent the castle walls before,
 Providing them with grass in sacks
 To lay across their horses' backs,
 Like peasants bound for Lanark fair.

- 448 Past where their friends in ambush were
They went. The English saw them go
With laden horses in a row.
Glad at the sight they quickly told
The tidings to their captain bold.
He was Sir John of Webitoun
A bachelor of fair renown :
In truth he was a gallant knight,
456 Not only terrible in fight,
But handsome and in peaceful hour
A favoured guest in lady's bower,
Who now went out in merry mood
His meagre larder to make good ;
They sallied forth so recklessly
And spurred their steeds so eagerly,
That, hasting on their prey to fall,
464 They left between them and the wall
The ambush that the Douglas laid.
The troopers, who the loads conveyed,
With speed then from each charger's back
Threw down the heavy-laden sack,
The smocks that hid their arms down flung
And on their saddles nimbly sprung.
Then with a shout their ranks they close
472 And forward charge to meet their foes,
Who, when they plainly saw revealed
Those men, before in smocks concealed,
Advance against them fully armed,
Were at the sudden sight alarmed,
And to the castle would withdraw ;
But, when on turning back they saw
The Douglas from his ambush rise
480 And come against them, their surprise
Was such that they were quite dumbfounded,
And, being on all sides surrounded
By foes that would no mercy show,
Instead of answering blow with blow,
They safety sought in shameful flight ;
But few of them escaped the might
Of Douglas and his valiant train.
488 Sir John of Webitoun was slain :

- When he lay dead upon the ground,
 A note within his purse was found,
 A letter written by the dame
 To gain whose favour was his aim,
 Which said that if the lover could
 But for a twelve months' space make good
 'Gainst all attacks the Douglas hold,
 496 Spite of the perils manifold
 That such an emprise must entail,
 To win her love he should not fail :
 In this wise was the letter written.
 Now when those English had been smitten,
 Douglas the castle next assailed,
 And there again his power prevailed,
 So that he quickly found a way
 504 Within, although I cannot say
 Whether it was by force or sleight,
 But he succeeded by his might
 In overpowering one and all,
 Both high and low, within the wall.
 He sent his captives all from thence
 With money for the way's expense
 Back to Lord Clifford's own domain,
 512 Then set to work with might and main
 To undermine the castle wall
 Until it tottered to its fall.
 Next to the greenwood he withdrew,
 Where many perils he went through
 And did so many deeds of might
 That he who should them all recite
 Could with good reason prove the claim
 520 Of Douglas to immortal fame.

Book IX.

- Now let us Douglas leave, whose life
Shall ne'er be free from toil and strife,
Until he sees the Scottish folk
Delivered from the English yoke,
And turn we to the noble King,
Who meanwhile with his following
Of gallant men in war array
- 8 Towards the Grampians held his way.
Sir Alexander Fraser came,
His brother (Simon was his name)
And all the folk they with them had,
To meet the King, who was most glad
And welcomed them with friendly smiles.
They told him all the cunning wiles
Of Buchan's Earl, Sir John the Comyn,
- 16 How not in vain he'd sent to summon
The good Sir David, Brechin's lord,
Mowbray, and all who drew the sword
Beneath their banners, to his aid.
"Above all else he yearns," they said,
"Vengeance on you, sir King, to take
For dead Sir John the Comyn's sake,
Who in Dumfries was stabbed and died."
- 24 "So help me, God," the King replied,
"Not without cause I did him slay,
But, since my adversaries say
That for his sake they'll war on me,
I will endure all patiently.
We'll try how they will prove their might,
And, if they venture to the fight,
Attacked, we will ourselves defend,
- 32 And take what fortune God may send."
Then the good King without delay
To Inverury held his way,
Where sickness did him much oppress
And brought him into such distress,

- That he refused to eat or drink ;
 None of his followers could think
 Of any drug that would avail.
- 40 His strength so much began to fail,
 That he could neither walk nor ride.
 His faithful vassals were beside
 Themselves with grief, and no one there
 Would have been half so full of care,
 Though he had seen a brother dead
 And stretched upon his narrow bed,
 As when their King so helpless lay,
- 48 Who was their only hope and stay.
 His brother Edward, that good knight,
 Famous for courage and for might
 And wise in counsel, tried his best
 To guide and comfort all the rest.
 When the King's nobles saw the curse
 Of sickness waxing worse and worse,
 They all agreed it was not well
- 56 That they should in that region dwell .
 Being so few, they did not dare
 To tarry any longer there
 Without a stronghold on the plain.
 So till the King was well again
 They thought it best to go from thence
 To place more easy of defence.
- If warriors should be captainless
- 64 They scarce can hope to win success,
 And if they do, 'tis not indeed
 As great as if their lord did lead,
 A lord, who boldly would advance
 And set his life upon the chance
 Of battle, boldly facing all
 That by God's will may him befall.
 When such a noble captain leads,
- 72 His men take courage from his deeds,
 And learn to fight so gallantly,
 That one becomes a match for three
 Unhappy men condemned to serve
 A recreant chief, who will unnerve
 Their spirits by the feeble way

- In which he flinches from the fray.
When he by whom they should be led
80 Has no more spirit than the dead,
Or turns his back and runs away,
Who can expect his men to stay ?
Their hearts for fear will surely fail,
They cannot in the field prevail,
Unless their courage be so high,
That honour will not let them fly ;
And even some of noble mind,
88 When by their lord thus left behind,
Will flee. though much against the grain,
For all to shrink from death are fain.
Such are the evils that arise
In war from leader's cowardice ;
Both he and his are forced to yield
And leave the enemy the field.
But he, who always fights in front
96 And boldly bears the battle's brunt,
Will by example so inspire
His men and fill their hearts with fire,
That deeds of arms, before believed
Scarce possible, may be achieved.
Such was the King of whom I write,
Who by his courage and his might
So cheered his men that doubt and fear
104 Would in his presence disappear.
But now his followers would not fight
When sickness kept him from their sight.
So to the Sliach in Drumblade
They bore him, in a litter laid.
In that high stronghold to remain,
Until he was himself again.
But when the Earl of Buchan knew
112 What place they had retreated to,
And that the King so sick did lie
That he seemed often like to die,
He sent his mandate far and wide
To call his vassals to his side,
A numerous band, for friends as well
Came to the tryst his force to swell.

- Sir John the Mowbray came, they say,
 120 Nor did his brother stay away ;
 Sir David, Lord of Brechin, too,
 Arrived with followers not a few.
 When they had all together met,
 They in great haste their faces set
 Towards the Sliach with their men
 There to assail the King, who then
 Was lying very sick, alas !
- 128 It was just after Martinmas
 When snow had covered all the land,
 That to the Sliach came this band
 Of foes against the King allied.
 The King's men on the other side
 Made ready, should the foe attack,
 To do their best to drive them back :
 Although their foes were two to one,
- 136 They would not therefore battle shun.
 The Earl's men came upon their way
 In gallant trim with trumpets' bray,
 And some among them knights were made.
 The King's men in the wood arrayed
 Their ranks for war with dismal cheer,
 But yet they waited without fear
 The coming of the haughty foe ;
- 144 Although they would by no means go
 Forward their foemen to attack,
 Until their leader's strength came back,
 Yet, if they were attacked, they would
 Defend themselves as best they could.
 Now when the Earl's great company
 Saw his opponents would not flee,
 But well arranged in order stood
- 152 Determined to defend the wood,
 The archers that were on his side
 Shot forth their shafts, to whom replied
 Right well King Robert's archer train,
 And made the others turn again
 Back to Lord Buchan's central force.
 'Twas thus that three days ran their course :
 The flights of arrows never failed,

- 160 But the King's bowmen aye prevailed.
 When they perceived that day by day
 The army that before them lay
 By fresh accessions larger grew,
 While they themselves were very few
 And oft, so hard they were bestead,
 Could scarce obtain their daily bread,
 The King's advisers did decide
- 168 That they could there no longer bide,
 And must seek other regions, where
 They might expect less meagre fare.
 The King was in a litter laid
 And from the Sliach so conveyed.
 On either side the foe might see
 His men of high and low degree
 Equipped with bow and sword and spear.
- 176 Slowly, like men who knew not fear.
 Around their King, a serried throng,
 In close array they marched along.
 Now, when the Earl of Buchan saw
 Their preparations to withdraw
 And marked the bold defiant air
 With which their King away they bare
 Like men whose courage would not fail,
- 184 He and his men began to quail,
 So that they let King Robert go
 Away from them without a blow.
 The Earl his way to Buchan made ;
 The King, upon his litter laid,
 Went to Strathbogie with his train,
 Where he did for a while remain,
 Until with rest he could recruit
- 192 His feeble strength and go on foot.
 To Inverury back again
 They went from thence, that on the plain
 They might obtain a safe supply
 Of food, till winter had passed by.
 The Earl, on hearing where they were,
 His friends collected everywhere :
 Mowbray and Brechin and their men
- 200 Assembled round his banner then

- Once more against the King to go :
 In truth they made a gallant show
 Of warriors, for Old Meldrum bound,
 Where quarters for the night they found.
 They were a thousand, I believe,
 Who on the eve of Christmas Eve
 Rested them in the town that night.
 208 Then on the morrow, when 'twas light,
 To Inverury o'er the sward
 Rode bold Sir David, Brechin's lord,
 To see if he in any wise
 Might do harm to his enemies.
 So sudden was his coming there,
 That, ere his foes were well aware,
 A number he surprised and slew,
 216 While others from his sword withdrew
 Towards the King, who took his rest
 Elsewhere, surrounded by the best
 Of his supporters. Being told
 Tidings of this incursion bold,
 And how Sir David, Brechin's lord,
 Had put so many to the sword,
 The King at once called for his steed,
 224 And bade all arm themselves with speed,
 For he himself would forthwith rise
 And cross swords with his enemies,
 Although from illness suffering still.
 Then those who bore him most good will,
 Exclaimed, " Before your strength is quite
 Restored, why go ye forth to fight ? "
 The King replied, " My foes, I'm sure,
 232 Have by bravado wrought my cure.
 No better medicine need I seek,
 For now I feel no longer weak."
 Seeing King Robert's courage high
 Made him resolved to do or die,
 His men rejoiced to think him healed
 And armed them for the battle-field.
 The good King and his armed throng,
 240 Who were about seven hundred strong,
 Towards Old Meldrum took their way,

Where Buchan and his army lay.

The outposts saw them coming fast,
 Their banners waving in the blast,
 And to their lord gave the alarm,
 Who quickly told his men to arm.

The rabble rout behind were placed,

248 The warriors were arrayed in haste,
 And looked like men resolved to fight.
 Although the King came on with might,
 They stood their ground and showed no fear
 Until their enemies drew near.

But when they saw the noble King
 His forces into action bring,

A little back their reins they drew,

256 And then the King who right well knew
 Their failing courage by this sign,
 Pressed hard upon their wavering line,
 Making them farther back withdraw.
 The common soldiers, when they saw
 Their lords were shrinking from the fight,
 Soon turned their backs and fled outright,
 Running in terror here and there.

264 Those lords who still together were,
 Seeing their followers would not stand,
 And that the King was close at hand,
 To panic-stricken fear a prey
 Gave up the fight and fled away,
 Holding at first in groups together,
 Then helter skelter, hither, thither.
 Thus spite of all their gallant show

272 The pride of these men was brought low,
 For, while they so ignobly fled,
 The warriors whom King Robert led
 Followed them up with might and main
 And some were taken, some were slain.
 The rest escaped ; the happiest man
 Was he whose charger fastest ran.

To England Buchan's Earl withdrew,
 280 With him Sir John the Mowbray too,
 And to King Edward's court they hied,
 But there they did not long abide,

For presently they both were dead.
 Sir David, Brechin's lord, had fled
 To Brechin castle which he manned
 With all the power at his command.
 The Earl of Athole, he whose sire

- 288 Had fallen a victim to the ire
 Of the first Edward, thither went,
 And in the town Sir David pent,
 Who, weary of the hopeless strife,
 Yielded to save his land and life.

- Now turn we to the King again,
 Who, glad such victory to obtain,
 Ravaged the Earl of Buchan's land,
 296 And burned it with unsparing hand.
 So dreadful was the mischief done,
 That fifty years from sire to son
 The folk of Buchan did not cease
 To mourn the ravage. To his peace
 He took the North, which from that hour
 Humbly submitted to his power,
 For all beyond the Grampians then
 304 Paid homage and became his men.

- Wider and wider grew his sway,
 To Angus when he made his way,
 And all the country hoped to free
 To northward of the Scottish sea.
 At Forfar the great castle then
 Was crowded full of English men ;
 But Philip, Platan's Forester,
 312 And trusty friends that he had there,
 With scaling ladders well supplied,
 In secret to the castle hied.
 They scaled unseen the stone-built wall,
 And, as no watch was kept at all,
 The castle easily was ta'en,
 And all the Englishmen were slain.
 The King was glad to get that hold,
 320 And well repaid its captors bold,
 And then, as he was wont to do,
 Destroyed the well, the walls down threw.
 When he had levelled with the ground

- The stone-built walls that girt around
 The Forfar castle, as I've told,
 The King, who was so wise and bold
 And thought to make all Scotland free
 328 To northward of the Scottish Sea,
 Went on to Perth with all his rout
 And compassed the good town about,
 So that from then the siege began.
 But, while they could the ramparts man
 And had of food a good supply,
 The garrison might long defy
 The leaguer, for the towers along
 336 The stone-built walls were high and strong.
 Two captains, Moffat, Oliphard,
 Within the town kept watch and ward,
 The Earl of Strathearn too was there,
 Whose son and some retainers were
 Ranged 'neath the banner of the King.
 Soon fiercely were they skirmishing,
 And many combatants were slain.
 344 The King, the shrewdness of whose brain
 Was ever by his actions shown,
 Seeing the mighty wall of stone
 Would, if well guarded, surely make
 The place most difficult to take
 By open storm and force of might,
 Determined to proceed by sleight.
 So, while he was encamped outside
 352 The town, he secretly had tried
 The depths of the surrounding fosse
 To find out where his men might cross
 Without the risk of being drowned,
 And when at last such place he found
 And six weeks of the siege were done,
 He bade his followers every one
 Prepare to take their things away
 360 And show they would no longer stay :
 Then forth he rode with all his men
 As if he ne'er would come again.
 When those within the city saw
 Them all preparing to withdraw,

- They shouted from the walls to show
 Contempt for the retreating foe,
 Thinking the King was gone for aye,
 368 When thus they saw him ride away.
 But ere eight days were gone, the King
 Bade his retainers ladders bring
 Made large enough for his intent,
 And darkling in the night he went
 Towards the town in secret wise.
 No startled watchmen uttered cries,
 For with no fear of what might fall
 376 The men within were sleeping all.
 The King caused them no anxious thought ;
 No messenger had tidings brought
 Of him for full three days at least,
 And so their carelessness increased.

- The King was glad that he could hear
 No cries and saw no signs of fear.
 As an example to his band,
 384 He took a ladder in his hand,
 And then in all his warlike gear
 Leapt in the ditch, first with his spear
 Testing the water's depth therein,
 Which did not quite reach to his chin.
 There was then in King Robert's train
 A bold knight from the banks of Seine,
 Who, when he saw the noble King
 392 Into the water entering
 Ladder in hand, was so impressed
 That in surprise himself he blessed,
 And cried, " By heaven, what shall we say
 Of our French lords who every day
 Their bellies fill with choicest meat,
 And will but dance and drink and eat,
 When such a knight, who stands so high
 400 In honour for his chivalry,
 Thus freely faces death and pain
 A hamlet poor as this to gain ? "
 He ran, so speaking, to the fosse
 After the King and went across.
 Encouraged by such gallant lead,

- The others forward pressed with speed,
Forded the ditch, and one and all
408 Attached their ladders to the wall.
But of all these, as I heard say,
Who scaled the wall of Perth that day
The King was second on the top,
And there did on the rampart stop
For those who followed. From the foes
For sometime noise nor cry arose :
At last began the hue and cry
416 When some one happened to espy
Armed men descending from the wall
Upon the sleeping town to fall.
The King sent parties up and down
To overawe the captured town,
While he retained a powerful band
Of spearmen in his own command
Ready to drive assailants back,
424 Should any venture to attack.
The scattered parties went about
The town, and put their foes to rout,
Who through the streets in terror fled,
And many they surprised in bed,
So that before the sun arose
They had prevailed o'er all their foes.
Moffat and Oliphard were caught ;
432 Young Malise for his father sought,
The Earl of Strathearn, and when found
Him and his men as captives bound.
The generous King for the son's sake
The father's lands forbore to take.
The other bands the township scoured
And, all resistance overpowered,
Took captives to repay their toil,
440 And carried off great loads of spoil,
Till they who had been poor before
Were well provided with rich store
Of clothes and arms : but few were slain.
The King had ordered that, on pain
Of his displeasure, they should show
To every unresisting foe

- Mercy, for much he wished to spare
 448 All who of Scottish lineage were.
 Thus Perth came into Bruce's power,
 Who straightway ordered every tower
 And all the walls to be cast down.
 He would not leave about the town
 Any defences, tower, or wall,
 But utterly destroyed them all.
 Then all the prisoners he made
 456 Were to safe custody conveyed,
 And peace was granted to the land
 Where no one durst his will withstand.
 Thus northward of the Scottish Sea
 No one opposed his sovereignty,
 Except the Lord of Lorn, and all
 The clansmen who obeyed his call.
 The rigour of his deadly hate
 464 Against the King would ne'er abate.
 But yet ere all the play be played,
 Methinks he will be fully paid
 For his misdeeds, when time shall bring
 The hour of vengeance to the King,
 And then, too late, he will repent
 That he was so malevolent.
 When thus were levelled to the earth
 472 The towers and walls of captured Perth,
 Sir Edward, brother of the King,
 Went with a gallant following
 To Galloway, his courage high
 Urging his restless soul to try,
 Whether he could regain the land,
 Which then the English did command.
 Sir Edward was a noble knight,
 480 Most famous for his warlike might,
 And genial in his hours of pleasure,
 But he was bold beyond all measure,
 A spirit of such high emprise
 That heavy odds seemed in his eyes
 Of little moment. Thus it came
 That ever greater grew his fame,
 For oft he would with followers few

- 488 A numerous host of foes subdue :
 The bard who could relate the story
 Of all the deeds that won him glory
 Might many a fine romance indite :
 Even I myself must something write
 Of him, although I cannot well
 The tenth part of his exploits tell.
 This knight, of whom such things are said,
- 496 With all who his command obeyed
 Did into Galloway proceed,
 And seized whatever served his need,
 Spoiling the country far and wide.
 In Galloway did then reside
 Sir Ingram Umphraville, whose name
 Was blazoned on the rolls of fame
 So high above the common rout,
- 504 That he would always bear about
 A bonnet red upon a spear,
 A token meant to make it clear
 He was the flower of chivalry.
 There also was Sir Amery,
 Knight of St. John. This noble pair
 Joint wardens of the district were.
 Now when they heard how all the land
- 512 Was ravaged by Sir Edward's band,
 They did their troops together call,
 I trow, twelve hundred men in all.
 Sir Edward with a smaller force
 Near where the Cree flows on its course
 Boldly withstood the wardens' might,
 And put their company to flight.
 Leaving behind two hundred dead,
- 520 The leaders from the battle fled
 To Buittle, hoping there to be
 From fear of death and capture free.
 Sir Edward Bruce pursued them fast :
 They reached the castle walls at last,
 Sir Ingram and Sir Amery.
 The best men of their company
 Were lying dead upon the place
- 528 Where they had fought. Soon as the chase

Ended, Sir Edward seized the prey
 And so much cattle led away,
 As was most wonderful to see.
 From Buittle tower they saw how he
 Made his men drive away the prey,
 And no one dared to say him nay.
 Sir Edward by his chivalry

- 536 Struck terror into Galloway :
 So much the people of the land
 Dreaded his prowess to withstand,
 That soon they begged for peace and swore
 They never would offend him more.

- Sir Aymer, chafing at the loss
 Sustained in battle, went across
 The Border into England, where
 544 A powerful force he did prepare
 For vengeance on the noble knight
 By whom he had been put to flight,
 Full fifteen hundred men or more
 Beneath his banner weapons bore,
 All men renowned for warlike might.
 Such was the host he took to fight,
 And soon with all this chivalry

- 552 He entered Scotland secretly
 To try if he in any wise
 Sir Edward's forces might surprise :
 He was resolved he would not fail
 His former victor to assail.

- Now shall ye hear a wondrous story
 Of deeds deserving deathless glory,
 For now Sir Edward in the land
 560 Was with his followers near at hand.
 Before the sun had risen high,
 Hearing the country people's cry,
 He knew the coming of the foe,
 And then, I ween, he was not slow
 To arm and leap upon his horse.
 There were some fifty in his force
 Well mounted and in armour clad.
 568 While then his other men he bade
 Seek some safe place and draw aside,

He with his fifty forth did ride.
A valiant knight in battle tried,
Who then rode by Sir Edward's side,
Sir Alan Cathcart was his name,
Courteous and fair, and of good fame,
Told me the tale I now shall tell.

576 Upon the hills that morning fell
A mist so thick that human eye
Could at short distance nought descry.
Now, as they rode, it happened so
That they found traces plain to show
The path the foe had passed along.
Sir Edward fired with ardour strong
To do a deed of chivalry,

584 In haste with all his company
Followed the path by which they went,
And, ere the morning was half spent,
The cloud of mist was swept away
And showed Sir Amery's array
At distance of an arrow's flight.
Sir Edward charged with all his might
At once, for, if he turned, 'twas plain

592 His men would almost all be slain.
So rather than from battle fly,
He boldly chose to do or die,
And, when the English company
Saw them come on so suddenly,
With bearing resolute and bold,
Their courage in their hearts grew cold.
Sir Edward's men without delay

600 Charged fiercely and commenced the fray,
And many foemen dashed to ground,
Which did the English much confound,
So that, alarmed by this attack,
They were completely ta'en aback.
Sir Edward and his gallant few
Have pierced the hostile ranks right through,
And turned their horses' heads again,
608 And, charging back, have many slain,
So that the English in dismay
Began to scatter every way,

And would not in their places stand.
 When bold Sir Edward and his band
 Saw how their foes were disarrayed,
 A third and fiercer charge they made.
 The foe, that saw them coming back
 616 To make another fierce attack,
 Fell into such a state of dread
 That all at once they broke and fled.
 None of them, high or low, was found
 Who longer dared to stand his ground :
 Eager their safety to make good
 All fled, and hotly were pursued.

While some were taken, others slain,
 624 Sir Amery did safety gain,
 Escaping with much risk and toil
 From where his men had met the foil,
 And all were taken, slain, or fled
 Through bold Sir Edward's hardihead.
 Lo ! how a sudden daring thought,
 When swiftly into action brought,
 May cause great deeds to be achieved
 632 Such as could hardly be believed !
 Even so in this case it fell out,
 Since valour, without any doubt,
 To fifty gave the victory, when
 They fought with fifteen hundred men.
 Two men, they say, can master one,
 But here one man made thirty run,
 For fortune so controlled the event.

640 Sir Amery to England went
 Right glad so well to get away:
 Henceforth I ween, for many a day
 He will not dare invade the land
 Of which Sir Edward holds command.

There that bold knight a long time dwelled
 Warring with those who still rebelled.
 The war throve under his command
 648 So that the people of the land
 At last were all compelled to yield,
 O'ercome in many a hard-fought field,
 For in that time, as I've heard tell,

- Many successes him befell,
Which are not all recorded here.
This well I know that in one year,
Thirteen strong castles to his sword
656 Yielded, and many a mighty lord.
If one would truly of him deem,
Save that his courage was extreme,
A worthier knight I will be bound,
At that time nowhere could be found,
Always excepting the great name
Of Robert Bruce, whose knightly fame
And honour were beyond compare
664 Of all men who then living were.
Valour without foolhardiness
And wisdom gave the King success,
So that he oftentimes achieved
Deeds that could hardly be believed.
While in the west such deeds were done,
The Forest for the King was won,
Where, now by valour, now by sleight,
672 James Douglas overcame the might
Of deadly foes and in the strife
Oft risked and barely saved his life :
Yet through his skill and steadfastness
And valour he obtained success.
One night, upon his way, it chanced,
As through the Forest he advanced
Near the Lyne water in the quest
680 Of place where he might take his rest,
He found by others occupied
The house in which he would abide,
And, listening just outside the wall,
Heard all the words that they let fall,
From which he well could understand
That they were strangers in the land.
The upshot proved he guessed aright,
688 For there with other men of might
Was Bonkill's lord who bore the name
Of Stewart : thither also came
Adam of Gordon, by whose side
Sir Thomas Randolph then did ride.

All these their bold retainers brought
 To Selkirk Forest, where they thought
 To occupy both hall and bower
 696 And all resistance overpower,
 Driving the Douglas far away ;
 But otherwise progressed the play.

When, James of Douglas was aware
 That strangers had found quarters where
 Himself had meant the night to stay,
 He told his men without delay
 To post themselves the building round.
 704 Then those within, soon as they found
 They were surrounded, quickly rose
 And armed themselves to seek their foes,
 Who met their charge with weapons bare,
 When they rushed out into the air.
 For some time neither side prevailed,
 Since both assailants and assailed
 Fought with great valour, but, ere long,
 712 The men of Douglas proved too strong,
 And those within the house gave way.
 Sir Thomas Randolph on that day
 Was captured, and Bonkill's bold lord
 Was wounded by some hostile sword.
 Thanks to his cunning and his might
 Adam of Gordon from the fight
 Escaped with many of his men.
 720 The others who were captured then
 Were, as they well deserved to be,
 Distressed at this calamity.

That night the Lord of Douglasdale,
 Sir James of Douglas, did not fail
 To entertain with right good will
 His cousin Stewart of Bonkill.
 He gave Sir Thomas Randolph too
 728 The welcome and the honour due
 To nephew of his lord the King.
 Then, without longer tarrying,
 Next day he sought the King's abode,
 And his two captives with him rode.
 The King was of their coming glad,

- And many thanks the Douglas had.
Then said the King to Randolph, "Thou
736 Hast been unfaithful to thy vow ;
But we must be once more allied."
Sir Thomas to the King replied,
" You blame me now, but all the same
Methinks yourself are more to blame,
For, warring against England's King,
You should at once your quarrel bring
To be adjudged by open fight,
744 And not by stratagem and sleight."
The King replied, " Perchance we may
Risk battle at no distant day.
But since thou speakest words so high,
And dost thy lord and King defy,
Thou must perforce be taught my right
And learn submission to my might."
Sir Thomas Randolph then was sent
752 To be kept in imprisonment,
That for a while his spirit bold
Might have its energy controlled.

Book X.

- When Thomas Randolph, as I've said,
Was by the Douglas captive made,
And after for his answer bold
Was close confined in castle hold,
The King, who all the while had borne
In memory how John of Lorn
Had striven to do him deadly harm,
8 Ordered his company to arm,
And, forming them in war array,
Towards Argyle pursued his way.
But long before the King got there,
Lorn of his coming was aware,
And soon the western hills among
Mustered a host two thousand strong
To hold the pass, which, as he knew,
16 The invading army must come through.
It was indeed an evil place,
In some parts scarcely yielding space
Through which two mounted men might ride
Safely together side by side.
The ground was perilous below,
For there a precipice did go
Down to the sea in sheer descent.
24 On the upper side the way was pent
By a great mountain's rocky mass,
A barrier difficult to pass.
That mountain Crechanben they call :
A loftier mountain height in all
Britain it would be hard to find,
And on it John of Lorn designed
To hide among the rocks his men,
32 That when the King reached Crechanben,
He might surprised and vanquished be ;
But he himself keeps to the sea,
Where on the waves his galleys toss.
The wise King, never at a loss

- In time of danger and mishap,
Having discerned the cunning trap
Set to destroy him in his course,
40 Divided into two his force.
To the good lord of Douglasdale,
Whose head and courage would not fail,
He gave in charge the archer train ;
And this good lord has with him ta'en
Sir Alexander Fraser's might,
And William Wiseman, a good knight,
And with him good Sir Andrew Gray.
48 They with their followers went their way
And quickly up the mountain hied,
And, ere their coming was espied,
They occupied the height that rose
Above the ambush of their foes.
When the King and his company
Were 'twixt the mountain and the sea,
The ambushed men of Lorn rushed out,
56 And shouted loud their battle shout.
Arrows they shot and rolled great stones
To crush the bold invaders' bones,
By which they little harmed the King,
For he had in his following
Many who young and active were
And did not heavy armour bear,
So that they lightly clomb the hill
64 And would not let their foes fulfil
The evil purpose they had planned.
Then James of Douglas with his band
First at the foemen shot a flight
Of arrows from the mountain height,
And after that with sword and spear
They downward rushed in full career.
Hard was the fight and many bled,
72 For Lorn's men fought with hardihead.
Thus for a time the stubborn foe
Stood fast exchanging blow for blow,
Till, being on both sides assailed,
At last their bold resistance failed,
And, giving up the unequal fight,

- They hurried off in headlong flight.
 They fled and were pursued amain,
 80 And many fugitives were slain.
 Those, who the stern pursuers' force
 Escaped, came to a water-course,
 That tumbled down the mountain-side
 A mass of waters deep and wide,
 Across which no man dared to go
 But by a bridge that was below.
 When they had reached the other side,
 88 At once to break the bridge they tried,
 But their pursuers close at hand,
 When at the bridge they made a stand,
 Upon them made a fierce attack,
 And drove them in confusion back,
 Preserving thus the bridge unbroke
 Until the King came with his folk
 And passed across the stream with ease.
 96 Much John of Lorn it did displease,
 When from his ships upon the wave
 He saw and could in no wise save
 The hapless vassals in his sight
 Or slain or put to headlong flight,
 For the great hearts of noble men
 Are moved as much to anger when
 They see a foe perform his will,
 104 As when themselves they suffer ill.
 So badly fared the men of Lorn,
 For many dead they had to mourn,
 And many of them fled away.
 The King then set his men to prey
 Upon the country's wealth. The spoil,
 That recompensed their warlike toil,
 Was rich and wondrous to behold.
 112 The good King, like a captain bold
 And active, gave his foes no rest
 But hastened onwards to invest
 Dunstaffnage Castle. Those inside
 A while the King's attacks defied,
 But could not long defend the walls,
 And presently the castle falls

The place was given a warden good
120 And well supplied with arms and food,
So that it might be safely held
Against whatever foes rebelled.

Sir Alexander of Argyle,
Who much lamented all the while
His wasted lands, delayed no more,
But sent a message to implore
Pardon, and he was granted peace.
128 But John, his son, would never cease
Even then from his malignity :
So with his ships he took to sea.
All those that stayed upon the land
Submitted to the King's command,
Who soon of all has homage ta'en
And unto Perth returned again,
Dominion of the plains to get,
136 For Lothian was hostile yet.

At Linlithgow there was a tower
Massive and strong, held by a power
Of many English, to defend
Armour and food that men might send
In both directions up and down
'Twixt Edinburgh and Stirling town :
They to the country did much ill.
144 Now may ye hear, if so ye will,
Of desperate deeds of valour done
And stratagems by which were won
Strong castles from the English power,
And one of those was Lithgow tower.

How it was taken I shall tell.
Within that region there did dwell
A farmer who for many a day
152 Brought to the castle loads of hay.
This man was William Bunnock named,
A stalwart hind for prowess famed.
He was by sorrow much distressed
To see his native land oppressed,
Because the strongest castles then
Were held by bands of Englishmen,
Who made the people do their pleasure,

- 160 Maltreating them beyond all measure.
 This stalwart tiller of the ground
 Had many friends who lived around.
 With them he secretly combined
 To carry out what he designed.
 They were in ambush to lie low,
 While he would with his wagon go,
 Taking, beside his load of hay,
 168 A burden that would heavier weigh.
 For the deep body of the wain
 Would underneath the hay contain
 Eight men with warlike arms supplied,
 While William Bunnock by the side,
 Like simple peasant, idly strolled.
 Another yeoman, keen and bold,
 Who a well sharpened hatchet bore
 176 Under his belt, should drive before
 The wain, and, when the castle gate
 Was opened, he should ready wait
 Till William Bunnock should cry out
 "Call, all, call all," and at that shout
 He with his axe should cut in two
 The trace by which the oxen drew
 The wagon. Then the men, who lay
 184 Inside all covered by the hay,
 Should with the ambushed men unite
 And all at once commence the fight.
 It was the pleasant harvest tide
 When all the cornfields far and wide
 Were with the harvest covered o'er.
 The different kinds of grain they bore
 Grew ripe to furnish men with food,
 192 And all the trees in order stood
 With various fruitage loaded well.
 Now at the time of which I tell
 They in the tower had cut their hay,
 And asked this Bunnock on a day
 To lead it in, for he dwelt near.
 The man consented without fear,
 And said the morrow following
 200 He would unto the castle bring

A wagon loaded high with more
Hay than he ever brought before.

He kept his covenant aright,
For secretly he warned that night
Both those who in the wain should go
And those in ambush to lie low.

The matter was right well arranged ;
208 Before the night to morning changed,
The ambush lay the castle near,
Where they could well the signal hear.
There they lay quiet that the foe
Might nothing of their presence know.
Then Bunnock little time did waste ;
The eight men in his wain he placed,
And even before the break of day

216 Covered them closely round with hay.
Soon as the sun shone o'er the plain,
He yoked his cattle to the wain.
Some luckless English from the tower
Had come forth in an evil hour
To reap the harvest near at hand.
Then William Bunnock, with the band
That in his wagon covered lay,

224 At once proceeded on his way,
Driving toward the battled tower.
The castle porter at that hour
Looked out, and, seeing him come near
Opened the gateway without fear.
Bunnock drove in without delay
His wagon with its load of hay.
Just as it passed the posts betwixt,

232 So that the gate was open fixed,
He cried out, " Thief, call all, call all,"
On which the driver, letting fall
His goad, the trace-rope cut in two.
Then Bunnock, without more ado
Deals the gatekeeper such a blow
That brains and blood together flow.
Next they who were within the wain

240 Leapt out at once, and soon have slain
Those of the castle who were nigh :

Hearing outside the hue and cry,
 The men that near in ambush were,
 Leapt forward with their weapons bare.

- Thus was the castle quickly ta'en,
 And those who were within were slain.
 Those who had gone outside the wall
 248 And there had learnt the castle's fall
 Went seeking refuge here and there,
 And some to Edinburgh repair.
 And others go to Stirling town,
 While some were on the way cut down.
 In this way Bunnock with his wain
 Has won the tower, the English slain,
 And given it to his sovereign lord,
 256 Who granted him a great reward,
 And razed its ramparts to the ground
 And went through all the country round,
 Settling the folk in peace, where they
 Were ready to accept his sway.

- Presently men were sent to bring
 Sir Thomas Randolph to the King,
 Who treated him so well that he
 264 Consented Bruce's man to be.
 He was forgiven his revolt,
 And, his position to exalt,
 Was made an Earl, and far and wide
 Moray and other lands beside
 He ruled, for well King Robert knew
 That he would be a vassal true,
 Since he was, as in duty bound,
 272 Trustworthy and of judgment sound.
 Therefore the King with liberal hand
 Bestowed on him much wealth and land,
 As it was right that he should do,
 For, if one speak of Randolph true,
 He was a very perfect knight,
 So wise in council, bold in fight,
 So noble-minded and so free,
 280 That he should ever honoured be.
 Therefore I think it well to write
 Somewhat about his deeds of might

- And to portray, even as I can,
The mind and aspect of the man.
His form was of the middle height
And moulded in proportion right ;
Broad was his face, pleasing and fair,
288 And ever courteous was his air ;
He steadfastly maintained the right
And loyalty was his delight ;
Ever he showed by deed and word,
That treason's baseness he abhorred.
He was the soul of honour, and
A man of liberal heart and hand ;
Genial and gay in festive hour,
296 A welcome guest in hall and bower.
Well loved he every worthy knight
And, if I should portray him right,
Then all good gifts of form and mind
Within the picture you should find.
I will not more commend him here,
But from his deeds it will be clear,
That Thomas Randolph well may claim
304 A high place on the roll of fame.
Thus to his sovereign's grace restored
And made of wide domains the lord,
First to his new-won lands he hied
For their safe keeping to provide,
Then hastened to the war to fight
For the good king his uncle's right,
With whose approval and consent
312 But no imposing armament,
Accompanied by men he knew
To be both valiant and true,
Towards Edinburgh he made his way
To the strong castle siege to lay,
Which, well supplied with men and corn,
Could all assailants laugh to scorn.
Yet this good Earl would not go back,
320 But onward pressed to the attack.
So close he hemmed the wall about,
That no one could go in or out.
The English must within abide

And eat what meat they had inside.
 I ween that they no longer could
 Ransack the country for their food.

- Sir Piers, a knight from Gascon land,
 328 Had by the English King's command
 The castle in his charge received.
 The English garrison believed,
 Now that the siege was so hard pressed,
 That this Sir Piers, who had addressed
 A message to our King, had planned
 To yield the castle to his hand.
 So him they fast in prison bound
 336 And one of their own nation found,
 A man of prowess and good head,
 To be their captain in his stead,
 Who was resolved by force and sleight
 Well to defend the rocky height.

- But now I leave them for a time,
 And turn the current of my rime
 To doughty Douglas, who was then
 344 In Selkirk Forest with his men.

- Much peril did he undergo,
 And many deeds of derring-do
 Achieved, as well by night as day,
 'Gainst those that in the castles lay
 Of Roxburgh and Jedburgh town,
 All which I cannot well set down,
 For some of them I know not well,
 352 And, if I knew, I could not tell
 At length the story of his deeds,
 For such a task my power exceeds :
 I will but tell what I know surely,
 Just as I can, or well or poorly.

- When good Earl Thomas, as I've said,
 To Edinburgh castle laid
 Strict siege, James Douglas all the while
 360 Was trying hard by force or wile
 Roxburgh's castle strong to bring
 Into the hands of Scotland's King.
 Sym of Ledhouse, a handy man
 Able to help him in his plan,

- He bade some scaling ladders make
Of hempen rope that would not break.
The rungs of toughest wood were made,
368 And furthermore, their plan to aid,
Each ladder had an iron crook,
So that they might securely hook
The top end to the castle wall
That it might neither slip nor fall.
When in the manner that I've said
The scaling ladders had been made,
Lord Douglas secretly did call
376 His followers, sixty men in all ;
Almost before the light was spent
Of the last day preceding Lent,
Towards the hostile castle they
Went on their course without delay,
Wrapt in black cloaks, which from the sight
Wholly concealed their armour bright.
They let their horses all go free,
384 While they themselves on hand and knee
Crawled to the castle in a line,
As if they oxen were and kine,
That for the night had been left out.
It was right dark without a doubt,
Yet one did to his comrade say,
Who on the wall beside him lay,
" This man intends to make good cheer "
392 (Naming a farmer who lived near),
" That he has left his oxen out."
The other said, " Yea, without doubt,
He will be blithe to-night, though they
Be by the Douglas led away."
'Twas thought the Douglas and his men
Had oxen been, for they went then
On hands and feet. The Douglas paid
400 Attention to the words they said,
Until, still talking as they went,
They left the lofty battlement.
Right glad to see them disappear
The Douglas and his men drew near,
And soon their scaling ladders fixed

- Firmly the battlements betwixt.
 One of the soldiers keeping guard
 408 Heard how the hooks of iron jarred
 Upon the stone, and thither came.
 Then Sym, who did the ladders frame,
 Clomb up the rungs with might and main.
 Yet, ere he could the summit gain,
 The watchman was already there,
 Who had that bastion in his care.
 Thinking to dash Sym to the ground
 416 He made no noise, nor cry, nor sound,
 But on a sudden rushed at him,
 And, in his mortal peril, Sym
 Leapt lightly upwards from below,
 And, seizing by the throat his foe,
 Stabbed him with upward pointed knife,
 Until he yielded up his life.
 Then when he saw the dead man fall,
 424 He mounted quickly on the wall
 And threw the corpse to those below,
 Calling upon them, "Be not slow,
 For all goes well, to climb the wall."
 Quickly they answered to his call,
 But ere they gained the top, came one
 Who seeing Ledhouse stand alone,
 Knew that he was not of their men,
 432 And hastily rushed forward then
 On him to make a fierce attack.
 Then Sym of Ledhouse was not slack,
 But quickly his assailant slew,
 For he was armed and active too
 Contending with an unarmed foe
 Defenceless against every blow.
 Meanwhile the Douglas' followers all
 440 Had safely scaled the castle wall.
 Then altogether to the tower
 They hied. The inmates at that hour,
 Singing and dancing, blithe and gay,
 Gave thought to nothing else but play,
 Since Fastern's Eve is every year
 A day given up to festal cheer

- By folk from care and danger free,
448 As those men deemed themselves to be.
But Douglas, ere they knew, and all
His followers were in the hall,
And, shouting, "Douglas, Douglas," loud,
Fiercely attacked the hostile crowd,
Who, hearing that dread war-cry sounded,
With sudden panic were confounded,
And, finding all resistance vain,
456 Were by him mercilessly slain,
Except a few who in their dread
Of death had to some hiding fled.
'Twas thus the hall was lost and won.
Then, seeing no more could be done,
The warden, Gilmin de Feniss,
With some few followers of his
In the great tower a refuge sought
464 And barred the entrance quick as thought.
The others who were left without
Were ta'en or slain without a doubt,
Excepting those who from the wall
Leapt down. So Douglas held the hall,
Which caused his enemies much woe.
His men were going to and fro
Throughout the castle all the night,
472 Till the next morning brought the light.
The English warden, war-renowned,
Who in the tower had refuge found,
The bold Sir Gilmin, when 'twas plain
That of the hold he did retain
No other portion in his power,
Determined to defend the tower,
And, though his enemies outside
480 That tower with flights of arrows plied,
Even until the following day
He stoutly kept them all at bay.
At last, when an assault took place,
He was so wounded in the face,
That in dire peril of his life
He thought it best to end the strife,
Yielding the tower to Douglas' hand

488 On terms that to their native land
 They should return free from attack.
 So James of Douglas sent them back
 Across the Border safe and sound,
 As he was by his promise bound.
 But Gilmin did not long draw breath,
 For soon the face-wound caused his death.

Thus Douglas won this castle all
 496 Surrounded with a mighty wall,
 And Ledhouse to the King he sent,
 Who did his fortune much augment.
 Sir Edward Bruce, for many a deed
 Of war renowned, then went with speed
 To Roxburgh to demolish all
 The castle, donjon-keep and wall.
 He brought a numerous company

504 And set to work so busily,
 That little time had passed before
 The mighty ramparts were no more.
 In Teviotdale Sir Edward stayed
 Till all the land the King obeyed,
 Excepting Jedworth and the grounds,
 Which lay too near the English bounds.

When Roxburgh in this way was won,
 512 Randolph, whose heart was set upon
 Performing deeds of derring-do,
 Was warring still against the foe
 In Edinburgh's rocky hold,
 As you have been already told.
 As soon as ever he heard tell
 How Roxburgh's mighty castle fell,
 He could not rest but set his mind

520 Some daring stratagem to find,
 So that he might by cunning train
 The castle that defied him gain,
 For well he knew he could not force
 An entrance and must have recourse
 To craft that stronghold high to win,
 While there were men and food within.
 Therefore in secret he began

528 To look if he could find a man

Who by some secret way would try
To scale the castle's rampart high.
To such he promised ample meed,
For in his mind he had decreed
He would adventure an attack
And for no jeopardy draw back.

- There was in Randolph's company
536 One William Francois, bold and free,
Who in his younger days had been
Within the castle. Having seen
That the good earl had set his mind
Some subtlety or wile to find,
By which the castle to surprise,
He met the earl in secret wise
And said, "Methinks you would be glad
544 If by some means a way you had
Whereby that castle wall to scale,
And truly, if you will not fail
To take the course I show to you,
I promise, as your liegeman true,
To tell you how to climb the wall,
And I shall foremost be of all.
For up the rock I'll take the lead
552 Right to the wall, where we shall need
A ladder twelve feet long, I trow.
Now if perchance you wish to know
How I know this, then must I tell
How years ago it so befell
That in that castle ruled my sire,
And I then full of youthful fire
Courtied a lady in the town.
560 That I might manage to go down
Unnoticed to my mistress fair,
I a rope ladder did prepare,
And nightly, in the darkness hid,
Over the castle wall I slid
Down to the crag and went apace
On to my lady's dwelling-place,
And soon as it was near to day,
568 I would return the self-same way,
And none would see me coming back.

- I went so often by this track,
 That I could find the way right well,
 However thick the darkness fell.
 So, should you be disposed to try
 The path I often travelled by,
 Up to the wall I can you lead,
 576 If God will help us in our need,
 So that we be unseen by all
 The English watchmen on the wall.
 When once the ladder's fairly set
 Against the wall, the first to get
 Upon the top must hold his ground,
 Till all his comrades gather round."
- This tale he told pleased Murray's lord,
 584 Who, promising a great reward,
 Bade him make far from prying eyes
 A ladder of sufficient size,
 For led by him one darksome night
 They'd clamber up the rocky height.
 Soon after was the ladder made,
 Nor Randolph many days delayed,
 Before he summoned to his side
 592 Some thirty men of valour tried,
 And led them in the shade of night
 To dangers hidden from their sight,
 So perilous was the emprise,
 That, could they but have used their eyes,
 They had not that steep crag ascended,
 Even though they found it undefended.
 In truth that hideous rocky height
 600 The stoutest heart might well affright.
 For there whoever slipped and fell
 Would never live the tale to tell.
- 'Twas very dark, as I've been told,
 When Randolph and his warriors bold
 Came to the rock at eventide.
 Then William Francois, as their guide,
 Stepping in crannies led the way,
 608 And in his footsteps followed they,
 Within the fissures here and there
 Placing their hands and feet with care.

When half the dangerous track was trod,
They landed on a ledge so broad,
That they could sit thereon and rest.
So being with hard toil distressed,
For further labour to prepare

616 They breathed themselves a little there.
But just above them on the wall
The watchmen were assembled all.

While on their rocky seat they cower,
May God protect them with His power !
For should their foemen them espy,
A cruel death they needs must die,
Defenceless crushed and overpowered

624 By heavy stones upon them showered.
But by good fortune, 'twas so dark,
That no man did their coming mark.
Yet of the English watch was one
Who from the rampart threw a stone,
“ Away, I see you well,” he cried,
But when he spake these words he lied.
The stone leapt down with many a bound

632 Over their heads but not a sound
They uttered. So the watch passed on
And to another place are gone.

Soon as their voices died away,
The Earl of Murray rose and they,
Who with him on the ledge did lie,
Towards the wall clomb speedily,
And hasted thitherward amain

640 Not without peril and great pain,
For harder climbing still remained
Beyond the point that they had gained.
Through countless perils safely passed
They reached the castle wall at last,
Which there was nearly twelve feet high.
Unseen by any enemy

They set the ladder to the wall,
648 And Francois first before them all
Clomb up, and next Sir Andrew Gray,
And then the Earl himself, they say,
The third was up the wall to go,

- And, when his followers from below
Saw how their lord went up the wall,
They clomb like madmen one and all.
Ere all could to the summit get,
656 The watch to guard the rampart set,
Knowing by voices that they heard
And sound of arms, that some one stirred,
All hasted to the threatened place ;
But them the Scots with valour face
And slay a number of their foes.
Then through the place the cry arose
Of " treason, treason," and that night
664 Many, o'ercome by panic flight,
Threw themselves headlong from the wall,
But this can not be said of all,
For the brave English captain, when
He heard the shouts of struggling men,
Put on his armour for the fight
And mustered many men of might.
The Earl fought those upon the wall
672 And soon had overpowered them all.
When thus the wall of guards was bare
And all his men had joined him there,
Down to the castle rooms he went,
Which was a perilous descent,
For those within so many were,
That, but for yielding to despair,
They Randolph's thirty had o'erthrown.
680 But now the constable alone
With those around him dared withstand
The onset of the Scottish band.
Stubborn the fray that then arose :
They dealt each other heavy blows
And cut and thrust with all their might
Till swords, that had been fair and bright,
Discoloured were with ruddy dye,
688 And cries of wrath and agony
Arose from warriors stabbed or felled,
Who in the hideous tumult yelled.
The good earl and his company
Fought in that fight so sturdily,

- That all their foes they overthrew
And there the English captain slew,
On which the others ceased to fight
696 And strove to save themselves by flight
Soon as they saw their leader dead.
The earl himself was hard bestead,
So that for him it happened well
That then the English captain fell.
Else had he been in jeopardy :
But then at once they gan to flee,
Eager each one to save his life ;
704 None of them dared prolong the strife,
And some slid down the castle wall.
By this the earl had conquered all,
And no one durst his power withstand.
I never heard in any land
Of castle wall so boldly won,
Excepting that of Tyre alone,
When Alexander, whose great power
712 Cast down the Babylonian tower,
Leapt off a turret on the wall
And there against his foemen all
Himself alone fought doughtily,
Until his noble chivalry,
Who wounds and death as nought accounted,
By ladders on the ramparts mounted.
For when they knew well that the King
720 Was in the town, there was no thing
That could their furious valour stop
Until they mounted on the top.
The walls surmounted, Arestee
First came to the good King, where he
Held back his foes with all his might,
Although in the unequal fight
Compelled to bend upon his knee,
728 And set his back against a tree,
Fearing assailants from the rear.
Arestree to his master dear
Soon fought his way right sturdily
And laid about him doughtily,
So that the King was rescued then,

For meantime here and there his men,
 Down from the city wall alighting,
 736 Rescued their monarch by hard fighting,
 And thus that mighty city fell.
 I can no other instance tell,
 Of such a valiant deed performed
 From all the tales of castles stormed.

The manner of this exploit bold
 Was long before the time foretold
 By good Queen Margaret, who was given
 744 Foreknowledge by our Lord in heaven.
 Instead of word prophetic spoken,
 She left a fairly pictured token,
 For in her chapel she had placed
 A lofty castle's picture traced.
 Against the wall a ladder leant,
 Up which a daring climber went,
 And old men say there written was
 752 Above, "Gardez vous de Francois,"
 And, for the words that there were writ,
 Men thought the French would capture it,
 And seeing Francois was the name
 Of him who up the ladder came,
 It surely was a prophecy,
 Which was fulfilled none can deny.
 For Francois, climbing up the wall,
 760 Thus brought about the castle's fall.

So Randolph Edinburgh did win,
 And every man that was therein
 Was ta'en or slain, or leapt the wall.
 Through all the castle, bower and hall,
 The victors seized whate'er they found.
 Sir Peris Lombard had been bound
 In prison, as I said erewhile,
 768 And there he sat in durance vile.
 They brought him to the Earl with speed,
 Who from his bonds the captive freed.
 He made submission to the King,
 Who, when the happy news they bring
 How good Earl Thomas by his might
 Had won the castle's rocky height,

- Does with a numerous following go
776 And bids them wholly overthrow
Both wall and tower down to the ground :
Then throughout all the country round
Men paid him homage as their lord.
Randolph received a large reward
For his great valour, and success.
The King, who saw his worthiness,
Being glad-hearted and elate,
784 In order to maintain his state
Gave him much land and revenue,
So that he great and greater grew
And by his merit won high fame.
His foemen learnt to dread his name,
For 'gainst the heaviest odds he'd fight.
What shall I say more of his might ?
His countrymen remember still
792 Lord Randolph's manhood and good will.
While all these enterprises bold
Were carried out, as I have told,
And all these famous castles fell,
Nithsdale and Galloway as well
Had made submission to the might
Of Edward Bruce, that valiant knight,
Who tumbled down the castles all
800 Into their moats, both tower and wall.
He then was told of hostile power
That held the walls of Ruglyn tower :
So there he hurried with his train,
And quickly did that fortress gain.
Next to Dundee he took his way,
Which then was held, as I heard say,
Against the King. Therefore in haste
812 Close leaguer round the wall he placed,
And, till the town was won, there lay :
To Stirling then he made his way.
Now at this time that valiant knight,
Sir Philip Mowbray, tried in fight,
As warden held for England's crown
The citadel of Stirling town.
The leaguer there was closely set,

- 816 The foes in many a skirmish met,
But no great feats of arms were done.
After the siege had been begun,
Sir Edward stayed a long while there,
Even from the days of lenten fare
Right on to St. John's holy day.
The English men that therein lay
Found their provisions failing then.
- 824 The Mowbray, doughtiest of men,
Sought terms, and soon agreed are they
That, if by next midsummer day
No English army should prevail
To raise the siege, he without fail
Would Stirling town and castle yield,
And thus the covenant was sealed.

Book XI.

- Mowbray no longer there abode,
But forthwith into England rode,
And there he told his sovereign liege
They had a year to raise the siege,
And rescue Stirling from the foe,
As I have erewhile let you know.
Now when King Edward heard him say
- 8 That Edward Bruce had fixed a day,
And that such ample time he had
For preparation, he was glad
And thought the Scots misled by pride
On such a treaty to decide,
For he intended ere that day
To muster such a great array
That no one could his march oppose.
- 16 The English nobles thought their foes
Were surely mad to fix a day
When they should meet in war array,
For Scotland in pitched battle would
Beyond all question be subdued.
But often fails the foolish thought,
And wise men's cunning comes to nought
So that their schemes may go astray.
- 24 Often a little stone, men say,
May cause a mighty mass to fall,
Nor can man's force contend at all
Against the ruling of God's grace,
Who keeps the whole world in its place
And does the course of things dispose
To serve the end His wisdom knows.
- Now when Sir Edward, as I said,
- 32 Had with the Mowbray treaty made
And in his terms been so profuse
Of time, he sent word to the Bruce,
Upon what day the foe must yield
The town or meet them in the field.

- But, when he heard the respite given,
The King exclaimed, " 'Twas rash, by Heaven,
I never heard that warning long
40 Was given to monarch proud and strong
As is King Edward at this hour,
For he has now within his power
England and Wales and Ireland too
And Aquitaine, and not a few
In other lands his rule obey ;
Even part of Scotland owns his sway.
The wealth with which he is supplied
48 Will pay for hireling troops provide.
Against so many we are few :
Kind Heaven may give us aid, 'tis true ;
Yet dreadful is the risk we'll run,
When all at once is lost or won."
Then said Sir Edward to the King,
" Though he should all his forces bring,
By Heaven, we'll fight them all and more."
56 When thus the bold Sir Edward swore
That they must doubtful battle try,
The King admired his courage high
And said, " My brother, since 'tis so
That we this risk must undergo,
Let us make manly preparation
And summon all the Scottish nation
Keen swords and steadfast hearts to bring
64 To fight for freedom and their King.
Let all who love us see that they
Are ready on the battle day,
That, should the English come to fight,
We may their hopes of conquest blight."
To this all heartily agreed
And told their armed bands with speed
All to be ready for the fray
72 Next year upon midsummer day.
Then every valiant Scottish knight
Bestirred himself with all his might
And bade his men-at-arms prepare
Weapons and armour, and whate'er
Armies equipped for warfare bring

- To battle. Meanwhile England's King
Was mustering such a great array
80 Of warriors. that I ne'er heard say,
That other English King could boast
Of leading such a mighty host.
When near approached the fateful hour,
He had assembled all his power :
Allies from many distant lands,
Sent to his aid their valiant bands ;
Of gallant bearing many a lance
88 Came over from the land of France ;
The Earl of Hainault brought along
His vassals, valiant men and strong ;
Gascons and men of Germany
Came and the best of Brittany,
Tall men well armed from head to foot
To fight with spears or arrows shoot ;
Then Scotland quite to overwhelm
96 Marched the whole power of England's realm,
None stayed behind who arms could wield
And play their part on stricken field ;
Many came from the Irish vales
And from the mountain height of Wales,
And soldiers of great might were ta'en
From Bayonne, Poitou, Aquitaine ;
From Scotland too King Edward yet
104 Could many valiant warriors get.
When all his troops were gathered round,
King Edward in his army found
A hundred thousand men and more,
And forty thousand horsemen bore
Armour of proof on head and hand,
Of whom three thousand formed a band
On mail-clad steeds to ride in front
112 And of the fighting bear the brunt.
Full fifty thousand of his force
Bore bows, not counting light-armed horse ;
Of men on foot and rabble rude
In charge of armour and of food
There was a most enormous throng.
So many carts were driven along

- That, without counting those that bare
 120 Harness and those that loaded were
 With plate, pavilions, and all
 The furniture of bower and hall,
 And wine and wax and meat and shot,
 Four score great loads of fuel brought.
 So many men marched side by side,
 The embattled columns spread so wide,
 So great a crowd of waggons rolled
 128 Behind them that one might behold
 That host the whole land occupy.
 You should have seen, had you been by,
 So many steeds of mettle high
 Prancing in splendid panoply,
 So many knights in armour gay
 And men at arms in war array,
 With hauberks in the sunlight gleaming,
 146 And pennons from their spear-heads streaming,
 That, looking on the glorious sight,
 You would have thought their battled might
 Must over all the world prevail.
 No longer to prolong my tale,
 To Berwick they have made their way,
 And some within the ramparts stay,
 While many more remain outside
 144 And on the tented field abide.

Now when King Edward saw how great
 His army was, he grew elate,
 And with his thousands mustered round
 He thought no monarch might be found
 In all the world who could withstand
 His onset. Then, as if the land
 Of Scotland now were his by right
 152 Of conquest, to his men of might
 He gave large gifts of northern lands
 That still remained in Scottish hands,
 And those who followed in his train
 Did not from haughty taunts refrain ;
 Yet ere they win all their intent,
 Holes in coat armour shall be rent.
 The King, as counselled by his men,

- 160 Arrayed his folk in battles ten.
 Ten thousand were in every band,
 Who thought that they would firmly stand
 And in the struggle stoutly fight,
 Undaunted by their foemen's might.
 Each of these battles was supplied
 With leader well in warfare tried.
 Two mighty earls for valour famed,
- 168 From Hereford and Gloucester named,
 Over the vanguard held command,
 Where mustered many a valiant band
 In war's magnificent array,
 And, being such great warriors they
 Believed that, when they went to fight,
 No mortal power could face their might.
 The great King Edward having then
- 176 Arrayed his host in battles ten,
 Determined what great knights should ride
 To war his bridle rein beside.
 Sir Giles de Argenté he told
 Upon one side his rein to hold ;
 On the other side rode Amery
 De Valence, famed for chivalry.
 In all his mighty host those two
- 184 Above the rest were leal and true.
 When England's King, as I have said.
 Had now in order due arrayed
 His host to crush his Scottish foes,
 Early one morning he arose,
 And the great army that he led
 The hills and valleys overspread,
 While his battalions deep and broad
- 192 Trampled with martial tread the sod.
 The sun that day was shining fair,
 Their arms that newly burnished were,
 Flashed gaily back the radiance bright
 Till all the country seemed alight,
 For banners in the sunbeams glanced,
 And pennons in the breezes danced,
 And many a quaint device they bore
- 200 Which to describe exceeds my lore.

- Though all about it I knew well,
 'Twould be a weary task to tell
 Each feature of their war array :
 So let it be enough to say
 Their King to Edinburgh straight
 Marched with that army, far too great
 For the few folk of one small land
 208 Without God's favour to withstand.
 ➤ King Robert, when he heard men say
 That England's King in war array
 And with such numbers was at hand,
 Sent messengers through all the land
 Calling his vassals to his aid,
 And they with zeal the call obeyed,
 Flocking to Torwood, where the King
 216 Bade them come with their following.
 Sir Edward Bruce, that valiant lord,
 Brought to his sovereign many a sword
 Borne by a gallant warrior band
 Of courage high and stalwart hand.
 Walter, the Steward, next appeared
 With chin yet free from manly beard.
 By their bold bearing it was plain
 224 His followers were of noble strain.
 James Douglas too among the first
 Came to the tryst with warriors versed
 In all the arts of war whereby
 Men triumph o'er an enemy ;
 For a raw soldier dreads the might
 Of those who, proved in many fight,
 Amid the clash of sword and spear
 232 Show they have lost all sense of fear.
 The Earl of Murray with his men
 All well arrayed came also then
 In good heart for the coming fight,
 Determined to maintain their right,
 And many a baron of great name,
 And many knights well known to fame
 Their valiant followers did bring.
 240 When all were mustered round the King,
 I trow that those who weapons bore

Were thirty thousand men and more,
Not counting peasants in whose care
The carts with food and armour were.

The King then through his army passed
And over all his glance he cast.

He marked their gallant bearing well

248 And by their very looks could tell
That of their number there was none
Who basely would his duty shun,
For with his war-experienced eye
The King could all the signs descry,
By which a practised chief can tell
That in his army all is well ;

And much it pleased his soul, I ween,

256 To recognise their courage keen,
Knowing that warriors so bold,
If they would to their purpose hold,
Would never fall an easy prey
To any foe. So on his way

He cheered his followers here and there
With kindly word and greeting fair.

Hearing their King thus condescend

264 With homely speech as friend to friend
To talk to them, they were right glad
And thought that they good reason had
For such a gracious monarch's sake
Their lives in deadly war to stake.

The good King, seeing his array

Assembled round without delay

All of them eager to fulfill

272 His bidding with good heart and will
And to maintain their freedom's right,
Derived much pleasure from the sight,
And, summoning his council near,
Said to them, " Now it is quite clear,
The English host in all their might
Have come embattled for the fight,
Hoping to save those leaguered walls.

280 So upon us, my friends, it falls
Their hostile purpose to oppose
And all the town's approaches close

- Where we can best their force withstand,
 We have just now at our command
 Some thirty thousand men or more.
 Dividing them in battles four,
 Let us arrange them, so that they,
- 288 Soon as the foe approach this way,
 May then towards the New Park go,
 For it is certain that the foe
 To Stirling by that route must pass,
 Unless they plunge in the morass.
 We shall have the advantage there,
 And, as I think, we should prepare
 Dismounting all on foot to fight
- 296 And wearing only armour light,
 For, if on horseback we should go
 To fight against a mightier foe,
 Whose horse by far does ours exceed,
 Our peril would be great indeed.
 On foot arrayed in armour light,
 We shall at great advantage fight,
 While in the park among the trees
- 304 Their horsemen cannot ride with ease,
 And heavy armoured men and horses
 Flounder in muddy water courses.”
- They all agreed with what he said,
 And in a little while arrayed
 In battles four their armed host.
 The Earl of Murray held the post
 Of leader of the Scottish van,
- 312 For in his leading every man
 Had perfect confidence, so high
 Was his renown for chivalry ;
 And to support his high command
 Some of the noblest in the land
 With all who them as lords obeyed
 Were with him in the van arrayed.
 A knight renowned for warlike deed
- 320 The second battle was to lead,
 Sir Edward Bruce, as brave a lord
 As e’er won honour by his sword.
 I trow he will acquit him so

- That, howsoe'er the game may go,
 He will not much rejoice his foes.
 The King for the third battle chose
 As his commander Walter Steward
 328 Supported by the Douglas' sword,
 Who, joined to him by kinship's band,
 Was partner in his high command
 To guide his youth, but none the less
 That stripling in the battle press
 Will prove to all who see his deeds
 That he in war no guidance needs.
 In the fourth battle of his host
 336 The King himself assumed the post
 Of leader. Under his command
 Were ranged the men from Carrick's strand,
 And those from Cantire and Argyle,
 And Highlanders from many an isle,
 Bold mountaineers, who drew the sword
 For Angus, Bute, and Islay's lord,
 And denizens of smother land
 344 Made stronger still the King's command,
 Who said he would the rear protect,
 And straight behind the van erect
 His standard, while on either side
 The other battles not too wide
 To right and left should form a wing.
 Behind them all the noble King
 Would give his aid where'er he found
 The enemy was gaining ground.
 'Twas thus that valiant King, so wise
 The best arrangement to devise,
 O'er all supreme in courage high,
 Prepared to meet the enemy.
 Upon the morn of Saturday
 His spies came to the King to say
 That England's host in all its might
 360 At Edinburgh had lain that night.
 Therefore he would no longer stay,
 But to the New Park held his way
 With all his troops for war arrayed
 And camped them in the woodland shade.

- In front upon the level ground,
 By which the English foe were bound
 To go, he knew, if they should try
- 368 The Scottish army to pass by,
 He told his men to hollow out
 Pitfalls .ome three feet round about,
 Where men would sink up to the knees,
 Much like the honey cells that bees
 Make in the comb. The King was there
 All night those pitfalls to prepare,
 And so they all were quickly made,
- 376 Ere morning light and overlaid
 With sticks and grass and rushes green,
 So that they could not well be seen.
- On Sunday morning when the sun
 Had scarce his daily course begun,
 They heard the mass and offered prayer
 And many of them shriven were,
 Who had made up their minds to gain
- 384 Freedom or be in battle slain.
 To God they earnestly did pray
 And all went dinnerless that day ;
 Through John the Bapti t's Eve they fed
 Simply on water and on bread.
 The King, mass over, went away
 Once more the pitfalls to survey,
 And was with them well satisfied,
- 392 Seeing how they extended wide
 To right and left as I have told,
 So that, if heavy horsemen hold
 Along that way I trow they shall
 Be likely to have many a fall.
 He ordered then his men that they
 Should armour don without delay,
 Making themselves as best they could
- 400 Ready for battle. When they stood
 Around, he bade proclaim aloud
 In hearing of the martial crowd,
 That any man who in his heart
 Felt that he could not play his part
 With stubborn valour in the field

- And would not rather die than yield—
 That such a one should go away,
 408 And none should stay with him that day
 Who would not hold out to the end,
 Whatever fortune God might send.
 The host with a resounding cry
 Gave one and all the same reply
 That none would death in battle shun
 Until the field was lost or won.
- When the good King had heard his men
 416 Give such a gallant answer then,
 Declaring that in battle's hour
 They would fight on with all their power,
 Defying death and craven fear,
 He was right glad such words to hear.
 Much he rejoiced, for well he knew
 That men so steadfast, bold, and true
 Would on the field maintain their right
- 424 Undauntedly in stubborn fight.
 Then sent he on the rabble rude
 Of poor folk with supplies and food
 Into the park that there they might
 Stay at a distance from the fight,
 And, as he bade, they went their way,
 (Some twenty thousand men were they)
 And gathering in a valley near
- 432 Left all the field of battle clear.
 The thirty thousand left behind,
 Warriors of steadfast heart and mind,
 Would to the death their lord obey.
 Thus then they stood in war array
 Ready to drive assailants back,
 Should any venture to attack.
- The King bade all for fight prepare,
 440 Because he now was well aware,
 That through the night the foe had lain
 At Falkirk, and from thence had ta'en
 The road with all their mighty men
 To where the Scottish camp was then.
 According to the King's command,
 His nephew, Randolph, with his band

- Beside the kirk took post that day,
448 So that no man might pass that way
Towards the castle unopposed.
The King with his fourth battle closed
The main approach against the foe,
If they should try that way to go.
Sir Edward Bruce, that valiant lord,
And young Sir Walter, the high Steward,
And Douglas, too, with all who were
456 In their two battles, with great care
Must watch the foe's advance, and lead
Their troops to aid where most was need.
Douglas was sent to spy the foe ;
Sir Robert Keith did with him go,
Who by his noble ancestry
Claimed the Lord Marshal's office high.
Mounting their steeds they rode amain
464 With well-armed horsemen in their train.
The English host soon met their sight,
A mighty mass of armour bright
Reflecting back the sunbeam's glance
From burnished buckler, shield, and lance.
So many broidered banners flew
Various in emblem, shape and hue,
So many knights on gallant steeds
472 Sat glittering in their martial weeds,
Such huge battalions deep and wide,
Covered the ground in power and pride,
That hosts the greatest and the best
That Christian monarch e'er possessed
Could not without a sense of fear
Have seen so many foemen near
So well equipped for mortal fight.
480 Those who were sent to view the sight
Returning back, as I've heard say,
Straight to King Robert held their way,
And told in private audience
The number and magnificence
Of the battalions great and strong
As they had seen them march along.
He bade them nor by word or mien

- 488 Reveal the truth of what they'd seen,
But, when they spoke in public, say
The foe had come in poor array,
That so his men might keep up heart ;
For often may a word impart
Discouragement, that ruins all,
And from a word it may befall
That men may hope and courage gain
- 496 Whereby their purpose they attain.
And so it happened in this case—
The courage and the cheerful face
Their leaders showed could animate
Even those whose courage was not great
And made them resolute that they
Would fight well on the battle day.
The King thus by his bearing brave
- 504 To his whole army comfort gave,
So that by his example fired
They were with courage high inspired
And thought that, while their King was near,
They had not any cause for fear,
For from the greatest dangers he
Would by his valour set them free ;
The monarch by his gallant cheer
- 512 Was so victorious over fear,
That even cowards death defied.
The English on the other side,
Marshalled for war in such array
As ye before have heard me say,
Their banners in the breezes dancing,
Were seen in warlike pride advancing,
And when they had approached so near
- 520 That but a space of two miles clear
Was 'twixt the vanguard and their foes,
A gallant company they chose
Of horsemen armed cap-a-pie,
Well mounted, led by captains three,
Knight-bannerets well-known to fame,
And with them bold Lord Clifford came
As sovereign leader of the throng,
- 528 Who were about eight hundred strong

They all were gallant, young and gay
 And yearned their prowess to display,
 And by their bearing seemed to be
 The flower of England's chivalry ;
 I ween that all King Edward's host
 Could of no fairer squadron boast.

- To reach the castle was their aim ;
 536 They thought that, if they thither came,
 They would the leaguered city free :
 So forward went that company
 And unto Stirling held their way.
 Avoiding where King Robert lay
 In the New Park with his main force,
 They went along a lower course,
 And by the church the squadron passed.
 544 'Twas there they were descried at last
 By stout Earl Thomas, who in haste
 Five hundred men in order placed
 To overtake them, grieved at heart
 That they had gained so good a start.
 The King had seen the band slip by
 And said to Randolph angrily
 That by the passage of the foes
 552 His chaplet fair had lost a rose,
 For it was by his post they passed.
 Therefore he hurried on so fast,
 That soon with all his armed train
 He came into the open plain,
 For there he thought his life to end,
 Unless his fault he could amend.

- Now, when the English saw him near
 560 And how, like men devoid of fear,
 He and his spearmen took the field,
 Back from their former course they wheeled,
 And, spurring their good steeds amain,
 Rode o'er the intervening plain.

- When thus he saw the foe advance
 With warlike shout and levelled lance,
 " Out with your spears," Earl Thomas said,
 568 " Nor of their shouting be afraid,
 But all together back to back

With spears repel their fierce attack.
In this way we may best provide
Against assault on every side."

They all obeyed the Earl's command,
And soon the foe were close at hand.

✠
576 To strike the first blow in the fight
Spurred in advance a valiant knight,
A mighty lord well known to fame,
Sir William Dencourt was his name :
With stubborn hearts unmoved by fear
The Scotsmen met his fierce career,
And he together with his horse
Was dashed to earth a lifeless corse.

584 To English hearts it gave great pain
That such a warrior should be slain.
Although the others were not slack,
They did not come to the attack
With such headlong precipitance,
But steadfastly they did advance,
And, in close order all combined,
Assailed the Scots before, behind,
Encircling them on every side,

592 Who with their spears made gashes wide
In every horse they could get at,
And those who on the horses sat
Were tumbled down and lost their lives.
Then spears and javelins and knives,
Whatever missiles came to hand,
Were hurled at the devoted band
Whose shrewd defence and deadly blows

600 Astonished much their English foes,
For they with sudden outward bound
Would leap upon their foes around
And stab the steeds and kill the men.
The English with such fury then
Maces and swords against them threw,
That in their midst a mountain grew
Out of the missile weapons thrown.

608 Thus the good Earl, as I have shown,
Was in the struggle hard bestead,
For fewer far were those he led

- Than were his foes who on each side
 Could round his small battalion ride,
 And from the conflict held not back,
 But pressed on boldly to attack.
 The Scots were in an evil plight :
 616 What with their efforts in the fight,
 What with the fervent summer sun,
 From all their limbs the sweat did run
 In reeking streams, and never ceased
 To rise from struggling man and beast
 Hot breath, which, mixed with dust and steam,
 Almost eclipsed the sunny beam
 With darkness that was strange to see.
 624 They were in great perplexity :
 But none the less with toil and pain
 The struggle they did well maintain,
 And strove with all their strength and might
 To be the victors in the fight.
 The English furious onslaughts made,
 But, should not heaven afford them aid,
 They will of fighting have their fill.
 632 Meanwhile, when good King Robert still
 Stayed with his trusty nobles near
 And saw how Randolph without fear
 Had gone into the open plain,
 Douglas came to his bridle rein
 And, " By our Lady, look," said he,
 " The Earl of Murray openly
 Into the field his men has led,
 640 Where he will be full hard bestead,
 Outnumbered by well-mounted foes,
 Unless some succour to him goes.
 With your permission I will speed
 To help him in his urgent need,
 Beset by foes on every side."
 " So help me, heaven," the King replied,
 " Betide him weal, betide him wo,
 648 To him one step thou shalt not go.
 No, Douglas, let him sink or swim ;
 I break not my array for him."
 The Douglas said, " I could not rest

And see the Earl so hardly pressed,
While I can any help afford.
With your permission then, my Lord,
I go to save him or to die."

656 "Then go," King Robert made reply
"Aid him, but be not long away."
The Douglas made no further stay.
If he arrive in time, I trow
He'll leave his mark upon the foe.

Book XII.

- Now Douglas went upon his way,
And on the selfsame hour that day
It happened that the English King
Arrived with all his following
Near to the place where, as I said,
The Scottish army was arrayed.
His battle to a stand he brought
8 And asked his council what they thought :
Whether they should encamp that night,
Or plunge at once into the fight.
The English vanguard, unaware
That their King's battle halted there,
Right onward rode without delay
To the New Park in war array.
- Now, when King Robert saw so near
16 King Edward with his host appear,
He mounted on a palfrey gray,
To set his army in array.
Along the front from band to band
He rode with battle-axe in hand,
And as he rode, his helmet o'er
A hat of leathern stuff he wore
Encircled with a golden ring
24 In token that he was a King.
Those under Hereford's command
And Gloucester's Earl were close at hand :
Before them all on horseback sped
With spear in hand and helm on head,
As brave a knight as e'er drew sword,
Kin to the Earl of Hereford,
Sir Henry Boune in armour bright,
32 Keen to win glory in the fight ;
On his high steed he rode before
The rest, a bowshot length or more.
King Robert by the golden crown
He wore as he rode up and down

Ranging his forces for the field
 Was plainly to the foe revealed.
 Sir Henry rode towards the King,

- 40 Who, when he saw his oncoming
 And how before the rest he sped,
 To meet him turned his palfrey's head.

Now when Sir Henry was aware
 That the good King would meet him there,
 He to the combat spurred amain,
 Assured that he would quickly gain
 Great glory and would work his will

- 48 Upon a foeman horsed so ill.
 Together to the charge they came :
 But bold Sir Henry missed his aim.
 The King high in his stirrups stood,
 Wielding his war-axe hard and good,
 And struck Sir Henry with such force,
 That nothing could resist its course,
 But downward in its sheer descent
- 56 Through hat and helm and head it went.
 The battle axe in two was smashed,
 The knight down to the ground was dashed,
 Deprived by death of all his might.
 That was the first stroke of the fight,
 A doughty stroke inspiring awe.

Now when the Scottish army saw
 The King thus at their earliest meeting

- 64 Welcome the foe with such a greeting,
 And with a single stroke lay low
 A valiant knight, they, all aglow
 With warlike ardour, onward dashed,
 The while the English, much abashed
 To see their valiant oncoming
 And even more because the King
 So quickly had that good knight slain,
- 72 Withdrew them from the battle plain
 And durst no longer wait to fight,
 So much they feared King Robert's might.
 The Scottish warriors, glad to see
 The English men before them flee,
 Upon their rear made fierce attacks ;

- In haste the English turned their backs,
And some of them were overta'en
80 And by their fierce pursuers slain ;
But in the flight not many fell,
Their horses carried them so well :
They fled away with nought but shame
Back to the place from whence they came.
When good King Robert with his men
From the pursuit returned again,
His trusty lords around him came
88 Declaring he was much to blame
For risking thus in doubtful strife
Against a powerful foe his life,
When at such disadvantage ta'en ;
For, had he captured been or slain,
Who then was left the realm to save ?
The King no other answer gave,
But mourned his battle-axe, that so
96 Was shattered by a single blow.
- Meanwhile Earl Thomas and his band
Still fought the foe on either hand,
And many Englishmen they slew.
Though with hard toil they weary grew,
Yet to defend themselves they still
Their weapons plied with right good will,
Till Douglas coming at great speed
104 Was near to help them in their need.
- The English then, when they caught sight
Of Douglas coming to the fight,
By wavering their fear revealed.
The Douglas, seeing that they reeled,
Knew that they soon would break and flee,
Therefore he bade his company
Come to a standstill where they were.
- 112 " Our friends," he said, " now fighting there
Are warriors valiant and strong,
So that, it seems to me, ere long
They will by their unaided might
Become victorious in the fight,
And, if we now plunge in the fray,
When they have almost won the day,

- It would be said that their success
 120 Was due to us, and so the less
 Of glory would to them be given,
 Who have so long in battle striven.
 Pity and shame it were to do
 What might impair the honour due
 To him whose prowess has achieved,
 A feat scarce possible believed :
 His glory we must not impair.”
- 128 The Earl and his men fighting there,
 Seeing their enemies give back,
 More hotly urged their fierce attack,
 And pressed them hard and harder still
 With sword and levelled spear, until
 They fled and durst no more remain,
 Leaving both men and horses slain,
 Not well combined in order fair
- 136 But helter skelter here and there,
 And those who lagged behind were slain,
 The rest rejoined the host again,
 Depressed in mind, with toil outworn.
 The Earl, who had so bravely borne
 Himself in battle, and his men,
 Who, like himself, were weary then
 And dripped with sweat, could now unbind
- 144 Their brows and feel the cooling wind.
 They seemed like men who with hard blows
 Had tried the valour of their foes,
 And so they did right doughtily.
 They found of all their company
 One yeoman only had been killed.
 At that their hearts with joy were filled,
 And, praising God that they so well
- 152 Escaped, they hurried back to tell
 The King their luck, and he, when they
 Had told him all about the fray,
 Commended them in gladsome tone
 For all the valour they had shown.
- Then all the army ran apace
 To look upon the good Earl's face,
 And all were eager to express

- 160 How they admired his worthiness.
So fast they ran to see him there,
That almost all assembled were.
So, when King Robert looked around,
And almost all his army found
With looks of gladness gathered near
News of the foe's repulse to hear,
He waited silent for a while
- 168 And then addressed them in this style :
"Sirs," said he, "let our praise be given
To God, who reigns above in heaven,
For such good opening in the game.
It surely must our foemen tame
To think that this day in a trice
Their best have fled before us twice.
For when through all their host is spread
- 176 The news of how their vanguard fled,
And how that other gallant band,
In which the bravest of their land
Were gathered, if I judge aright,
To win them glory in the fight,
Has such a sharp repulse endured,
When least expected, be assured
The heart in many an English breast,
- 184 That once was brave, will be depressed,
And when the heart begins to fail,
The body's strength can not prevail.
Therefore I think what's well begun
Shall to a happy ending run.
But do not think that this I say
To make you all my will obey,
For in your hands the choice must rest
- 192 To fight, or not. If ye think best
To fight, we shall the battle try.
If not, then, too, I will comply
With what ye think, and not refuse
To do whatever ye may choose.
Therefore aloud declare your choice."
Then all the army with one voice
Cried out, "Good King, without delay
- 200 To-morrow, soon as it is day,

Let us the enemy assail :
 For fear of death we will not fail.
 Until our freedom has been won,
 Nor pain, nor danger will we shun."

- When the King heard his soldiers all
 So valiantly for battle call,
 His heart with joy did overflow.
- 208 "Lordings, since ye will have it so,"
 Said he, "to-morrow, when the sun
 His daily course begins to run,
 Let every warrior in the host,
 After the mass, go to his post,
 That all our ranks with flags displayed
 Before the tents may be arrayed.
 Take care ye no wise break your ranks,
- 216 And, if ye wish to earn my thanks,
 Let every captain with him take
 A bannerman for honour's sake,
 And, when it is the time to fight,
 Let us put forward all our might
 To overthrow our foemen's pride.
 Though high on horseback they may ride,
 Rush on to meet them without fear,
- 224 Opposing them with levelled spear,
 That ample vengeance be secured
 For all the wrongs we have endured,
 And for the wrongs they would do still,
 If but their power could match their will,
 And certainly I think that we
 Should of the event not doubtful be,
 But boldly with the English cope,
- 232 Since we have reasons three for hope.
 The first is that our cause is right
 And God will surely for us fight.
 The second is that they this hour,
 Confiding in their mighty power,
 Have come to seek us in our land,
 And have brought ready here to hand
 Of riches such abundant store,
- 240 That none of you shall any more
 Be poor and needy, if to-day

- We victors prove, as well we may.
The third is that we for our lives
And for our children and our wives
And for the freedom of the land
Are here constrained in arms to stand,
While they are marshalled for the fight,
248 Because they would display their might,
And think that to destroy us all
Is no hard task : yet it may fall
That they repent their coming here.
Now one thing to my mind is clear,
That if, which God forefend, they should
Find us so void of hardihood,
That they can work our overthrow,
256 They will but little mercy show.
So since we know their purpose fell,
It seems to me we shall do well
Their hate with stoutness to oppose
And so be even with our foes.
Therefore I you require and pray
Your utmost valour to display,
And let the English feel your might
264 From the beginning of the fight,
Tame now their foremost ranks with fear,
Which soon will spread from front to rear.
Bethink you of your hardihood,
My friends, and be of courage good.
Think of the joy that will be yours,
If haply, as my soul assures
We shall, we put the foe to rout.
272 Then in your hands without a doubt
Rich prizes and much wealth will fall
And freedom and great joy withal,
If you acquit yourselves like men.
But if your courage fails, why then
Your cowardice will lose the gain
You can by valiant deeds obtain.
Since thraldom's base estate ye spurned
280 And for the life of freemen yearned,
Ye are assembled here with me.
Therefore 'tis needful that ye be

- Victorious on the battle plain ;
 For I must warn you once again,
 That captives in their hands to fall
 Would be of evils worst of all.
 Soon would they slay both me and you,
- 288 Just as my brother Neil they slew.
 But when I think your worth upon
 And all the valiant deeds you've done,
 How stoutly erst ye faced the foe,
 Then for a certainty I know
 We shall be victors in the fight.
 For though our foes be great in might,
 The cause that we maintain is just,
- 296 While nought but arrogance and lust
 Of lordship brings them to our land.
 Before us all our foemen stand,
 And in this place we need not fear
 Attacks upon our flank or rear.
 But now I pray you first of all,
 That none among you, great or small,
 Be tempted by a greedy eye
- 304 Yourselves with riches to supply
 By making captives, ere you know
 Your foemen to be brought so low,
 That they have plainly lost the day,
 And then without reproach you may
 Take all the plunder you can find.
 If these my words ye bear in mind,
 We shall be sure to win the day.
- 312 What more at present need I say ?
 What honour is, ye all well know ;
 Quit you like men, your valour show,
 And win the meed of honour high.
 Upon my troth I certify
 Of those who in this battle fall
 The heirs shall pay no tax at all
 For heritage, and take in hand
- 320 At once, however young, their land.
 Now make you ready for the fight
 And may great God protect the right !
 I counsel that all night we be

Prepared for battle, so that we
May guard ourselves against surprise.”
“ It shall be just as you devise,”

They all replied with one consent
328 And straightway to their quarters went
To carry out the King's commands ;
At eventide, they joined their bands,
And kept strict watch all through the night
Prepared at any hour to fight.

When, as I have already said,
Lord Clifford's broken band had fled,
And the great English van's attack
336 Was in confusion driven back,
And when those in the routed van
Had told how from the field they ran,
And how King Robert at one blow
Had laid a mighty champion low,
And how the Scottish host that day
Had issued forth in war array,
And how Sir Edward Bruce had led
344 The onset, when the vanguard fled,
And many of their number fell,
And when Lord Clifford told as well
How Thomas Randolph took the plain
With a few spearmen, and had slain
Sir William Dencourt by sheer might,
And borne him nobly in the fight,
And how his troop, like hedgehog's hide,
352 Bristling with spears on every side,
Had driven the English back again
And many a valiant warrior slain,
All those who to this tale gave ear
Were so dismayed with craven fear,
That in five hundred groups assembled,
Whispering of what was told, they trembled,
And said, “ Our lords in pride of might
360 Persist in warring 'gainst the right.
But those who drawing unjust sword
Too rashly tempt the Almighty Lord
May of their deed repent too late,
And such ere long may be our fate.”

- But when their leaders came to hear,
 That, to exchange such words of fear,
 Men came together here and there,
 368 They sent out heralds to declare
 Among the soldiers that they had
 Small cause to be downcast and sad,
 For often victory and rout
 In skirmishes went turn about,
 But now these casual frays were ended,
 And, in the battle that impended,
 If they could put the Scots to flight,
 376 The issue would make all things right.
 Therefore the heralds prayed them all
 Their former courage to recall,
 That on the fateful battle plain
 What they had lost they might regain.
 These may exhort them as they will,
 And they may promise to fulfil
 Their duty in the battle fray,
 384 Yet thus they will not drive away
 The fears that still methinks will cling
 About their hearts. Meantime their King
 Resolved in council not to fight,
 Unless compelled, ere morning light.
 So there throughout the night they stayed
 Camped in the Carse and ready made
 That they might, when the morning came,
 392 Be well in order for war's game,
 And, as the Carse was swampy ground,
 They took from all the houses round
 Rafters across the pools to lay,
 And from the castle, as men say,
 Seeing their army's sorry plight,
 There came beneath the shade of night
 As many English as were there,
 400 And with them doors and shutters bare,
 With which before the break of day
 They bridged across the pools, that they
 Might have firm ground whereon to stand,
 And that their horse upon dry land
 Might cross all ready for the fight

- ✓ ~~II~~ Soon as they saw the morning light.
The Scottish men, when it was day,
408 Devoutly knelt the mass to say,
And after prayer they took some food
And then in battle order stood,
All in their several troops arrayed
With banners broad above displayed.
According to heraldic rites,
Upon the field of battle, knights
Were dubbed by good King Robert's sword,
416 Sir Walter Steward, and the Lord
Of Douglasdale, and more beside,
All noble men of valour tried.
When all was done, as I have said,
They went to battle, well arrayed ;
Many brave warriors true and good
Eager to prove their hardihood
Under their banners you might see
424 Advance to battle openly.
The English on the other side
As bright as angels were descried,
Not like the Scottish troops arrayed,
But all their troops united made
One solid mass, perhaps because
The battle field so narrow was,
That they had little room to spread ;
432 Perhaps they still were full of dread,
And far apart they dared not go ;
I cannot tell, but this I know
That all were in one body massed
Except the vanguard, which stood fast
All by itself in order fair.
You would have seen, had you been there,
Their army overspread the field,
440 And many a flashing sword and shield,
And many a famous man of might
Arrayed in armour burnished bright,
And many a banner brave and sheen
Was in their serried phalanx seen.
Now when the King of England saw
The Scottish men together draw

- To dare the conflict, all arrayed
 448 On foot, he wondered much and said,
 "What think ye? Will those Scotsmen fight?"
 "Yea, surely, sir," replied a knight,
 Sir Ingram Umphraville was he,
 "Forsooth," he said, "Sir, now I see
 A wondrous sight before my eyes,
 A Scottish army that defies
 An English King's embattled might,
 456 And ventures boldly out to fight
 A battle in the open field;
 But if your Majesty will yield
 Unto my words an open ear,
 Ye will not wait their onset here.
 The victory will soon be ours,
 If we withdraw our warlike powers
 With flying banners past the land,
 464 Whereon our gay pavilions stand.
 So shall you quickly see how they,
 Spite of their lords, will break away
 Our harness and supplies to plunder!
 Then, when their ranks thus part asunder,
 Charge boldly back with sword and spear.
 Little resistance need we fear,
 For, rushing through the tents at large,
 472 How can they face our serried charge?"
 "No one, by Heaven," replied the King,
 "Shall say I e'er did such a thing,
 As from the battle turn about
 And flee before that rabble rout."

- When all was done, as I have said,
 The Scottish men knelt down and prayed.
 Short was the prayer to Heaven they sent,
 480 As on their knees they humbly bent,
 That God might aid them in the fight.
 Now when the English King caught sight
 Of those who knelt their prayers to say,
 "For mercy," he exclaimed, "they pray."
 Sir Ingram said, "Your words are true.
 Mercy they ask, but not from you:
 For God's forgiveness they implore:

- 488 And hear for certain one thing more :
Those men will either do or die,
For fear of death they will not fly."
" So let it be," replied the King,
And without longer tarrying
He bade the battle trumpet sound.
Then on both sides there gathered round
Their leaders' banners men of might
- 496 All eager for the coming fight.
Thus they advanced on either side :
The English van in martial pride
With fearless hearts came sweeping on
To where Sir Edward's banner shone.
Straight as an arrow was their course,
And each brave warrior spurred his horse.
Upon the Scots they fiercely set
- 504 And were with equal courage met.
When these two battles spear to spear
Encountered, far off you might hear
The clash of arms and captains' shout,
And then was stabbed without a doubt
Full many a horse of gallant strain,
And men were dashed to earth and slain ;
Most valiant deeds of war were wrought,
- 512 As hand to hand they stoutly fought.
Weapons of every kind they plied,
Steeds gored with gashes deep and wide
Rushed here and there all masterless,
But the remainder, through the press
That might come to the shock of war,
Would not for fear remain afar,
But boldly in the combat closed,
- 520 And were right sturdily opposed
With lances that were sharp to wound
And axes that had been well ground,
Wherewith much deadly harm was wrought.
The fight was there so fiercely fought,
That many a warrior strong and bold
Headlong upon the earth was rolled,
Who never more should rise again.
- 528 The Scottish men with might and main

Were struggling to repulse the foe,
 And were prepared to undergo
 All pains and perils, if they might
 Prove victors in the doubtful fight.

- Now when the Earl of Murray's eye
 The English van could well espy
 Boldly advance to the attack,
 536 And how Sir Edward paid them back,
 His noble banner he outspread
 And them who fought beneath it led,
 Where the great English host was massed
 Nine battles in one legion vast ;
 It was a marvel to behold
 So many thousand warriors bold.
 The good Earl thither took his way,
 544 His battle ranged in war array,
 And pressed them hard with levelled spear,
 So that, whoever had been near,
 Had heard great spears in flinders fly,
 When England's mail-clad chivalry
 Came to the charge in martial pride,
 As if resolved to override
 The Earl and his small company ;
 552 But they were met so sturdily,
 That many a warrior bit the dust,
 And spears through gallant steeds were thrust,
 Whose riders, rolling on the ground,
 From trampling hoofs no refuge found.
 While neither side as yet prevailed,
 And some defended, some assailed,
 Struck hard was many a stalwart stroke
 560 By Scots and Englishmen, which broke
 The strongest bucklers, and the blood
 Streamed down to earth in copious flood.
- The Earl of Murray and his men,
 Although they were not one to ten,
 From the hard conflict did not flinch,
 But drove the English inch by inch
 Backward before their spears : and yet.
 568 On every side by foes beset,
 They were so few, they seemed to be

Engulfed within a hostile sea.
Now when it could be plainly seen,
How Randolph and the warriors keen
Beneath his banner boldly fought
As if they were afraid of nought,
The English charged with all their might ;
576 The Scottish men with axes bright
And sharp edged sword and spear and mace
Stoutly opposed them face to face.
Then might you see those valiant foes
In battle fierce exchanging blows
Eager to stain in hostile gore
The murderous weapons that they bore,
Till many warriors dropt down dead,
584 And with their blood the grass was red.
Lord Randolph and his warriors good
Bore themselves with such hardihood,
That whoso saw their work that day
And how they fought, might surely say
That they would well their duty do,
And make their foes the conflict rue.

Book XIII.

- When, as I've made you understand,
These battles struggled hand to hand,
Sir Walter, who was Steward then,
And good Lord Douglas and their men
Seeing the Earl of Murray go
With dauntless heart against the foe,
And with his single battle charge
- 8 An army so exceeding large,
Themselves beside Lord Randolph placed,
And let the foe their valour taste,
And their sharp-pointed weapons feel :
Right well they plied their deadly steel,
And wondrous valour they displayed.
Their foes a stout resistance made
With mace and spear and sword and knife,
- 16 And with such fury raged the strife,
That pouring from deep wounds the blood
Spread o'er the soil a purple flood.
The Scotsmen bore themselves so well,
That many of the English fell
Beneath their blows to rise no more,
Dyeing the greensward with their gore.
While these three battles in a row
- 24 Fought side by side against the foe,
One might have heard far off the clang
Of weapons that on armour rang,
And seen down tumbling knights and steeds,
And how their rich and princely weeds
Were trampled on the dusty plain :
Some kept their seats, and some were slain.
A long while thus they fought : no word
- 32 Was uttered, and no sound was heard,
Save dying groans and many a dint
That struck out fire like steel from flint.
For one and all fought eagerly,
Shouting aloud no battle cry,

- But, wielding weapons burnished bright,
They laid on blows with all their might.
The arrows in such numbers fell
- 40 That whoso saw them might say well
That they a hideous shower did make,
For where they fell I undertake
They left behind them marks, which will
Severely test the leech's skill.
The English archers shot so fast,
That, should the storm of arrows last,
The Scottish host would badly fare.
- 48 The good King Robert, well aware
How deadly was the arrow flight
Shot by the English bowmen's might,
Had sent his Marshal to take post
In front of the assembled host
With all his band in armour bright,
Well mounted on their horses light,
Five hundred strong, prepared to charge
- 56 And drive the archer band at large,
So that they'd bend their bows no more.
This lord, of whom I spake before,
Sir Robert Keith, who then did hold
The marshalship, as you've been told,
Soon as he saw the battles so
In hostile strife together go,
And how the English arrows flew,
- 64 Instantly, without more ado,
Did forward to disperse them ride,
And charged them fiercely from the side.
He and his men so rudely broke
The hostile ranks, with hostile stroke
Of swords and lances laying low
The hapless wielders of the bow,
That in confusion every one
- 72 Fled from the place, and there was none
That dared again to bend his bow.
When the Scots archers came to know
The English archers' evil plight,
They in their turn with all their might
Let their death-dealing arrows fly

- Among the English cavalry,
 Aiming at horse and man so well
 80 That many dead or wounded fell.
 For when the English archers were
 Cut down and scattered here and there,
 Who by their numbers, ere they fled,
 Inspired an overpowering dread,
 The Scottish archers boldly thought
 They might set all their foes at nought.
 The marshall and his horsemen bold
 88 Had charged, as I before have told,
 Among the archers, whom they speared
 And through their midst a passage cleared,
 And whom they could o'ertake they slew,
 Since it was easy so to do
 For them who had no cause to fear
 The point of any threatening spear,
 And unarmed men have little might
 96 When with such well-armed foes they fight.
 The English archers in their fear
 Before the fierce pursuing spear
 Towards the main battalia fled
 Or far into the country sped.
 But now the troops arrayed behind
 Who found their space too much confined
 So that all could not join the fray,
 Let not the routed archers stay
 Within their ranks, but drove them back
 With hearts so spiritless and slack,
 That they were of no further use.

- Meanwhile when good King Robert Bruce
 So famous for his chivalry,
 Perceived how all his battles three
 Advanced with valour to the fight
 112 And bore themselves like men of might,
 Striking hard blows with sword and spear,
 As if they had no sense of fear,
 And how the English archers fled,
 Right gladly to his men he said :
 "Sirs, it behoves you now this day
 Your faith and valour to display,

- And bear you on the battle-field,
120 Like men who'd rather die than yield,
That no one may withstand your might.
Our friends there with such courage fight,
That, see, the foe begin to fail.
One effort more and we prevail !
Advance we now with all our powers,
And victory will soon be ours."
- When the good King these words had said,
128 His battle to the front he led,
And with such force his foes assailed,
That they before his onset quailed.
Had you been there, you might have seen
What deeds were done by warriors keen,
Who fought with anger in their hearts
And zealously performed their parts.
The Scotsmen, finding that the foe
136 Stoutly returned them blow for blow
And did the struggle well maintain,
Laid on their blows with might and main,
Like men who furious anger felt :
Such heavy strokes their weapons dealt
As English armour could not brook.
They cut down all they overtook :
Beneath their battle axes' stroke
144 Both head and iron head-piece broke.
The English stoutly them opposed
And in the conflict fiercely closed :
With trenchant sword and spear and shield
Hardly contested was that field.
Loudly resounded then the clang,
As weapons upon armour rang.
Then were the shafts of lances shivered,
152 And many deadly thrusts delivered,
And many missile weapons thrown.
Far sounded shout and dying groan,
While wounded men on either side
With rage or anguish loudly cried.
Most hideous were the noises made
When those four battles well arrayed
Engaged the foe in stubborn fight.

- 160 By heaven it was a goodly sight
To see Sir Edward and his men
How they assailed the English then,
For well he led them to the fray,
And warriors brave and strong were they.
The English army in the front
Could not for long sustain the brunt
Of such a furious attack,
- 168 But, fearing for their lives, drew back.
A struggle hard they had on hand,
For now the Scots, one serried band,
Struck terror in the hearts of all.
Who happened in that fight to fall,
I trow again he should not rise.
There might one see in sundry wise
Performed full many a noble deed,
- 176 And many a valiant warrior bleed
On the red earth a lifeless corse,
Trampled by feet of man and horse.
The arms and ensigns that they bore
Were so defiled with blood and gore
That they could scarce distinguished be.
It was a wondrous sight to see
Walter the Steward wield his sword
- 184 And by his side that valiant lord,
James Douglas, in the battle fray.
Who saw them there, would surely say,
That they most nobly in the fight
Withstood the English foemen's might ;
Where'er through hostile ranks their way
They forced, fled wandering far astray
Without a rider many a steed.
- 192 Ah heaven ! who then had ta'en good heed
To watch Lord Randolph and his band
Engage in battle hand to hand,
Had seen them in that fierce turmoil
Reckless of labour and of toil,
So that, where'er they turned their course,
The English had to yield perforce.
Then many famous battle cries
- 200 Rose boldly shouted to the skies.

- “ On, on,” the Scotsmen cried, “ they fail,”
And once again they did assail
More fiercely still and slew the foemen,
And all the while the Scottish bowmen
Bending with power their deadly bows
All o’er the field distressed their foes,
Till, what with those who with them fought
208 And in their ranks such havoc wrought
Pressing them hard with all their power,
What with the bitter arrowy shower
That burst upon them with such force
Inflicting wounds on man and horse
And made them draw some distance back,
The English, at the fierce attack
Alarmed, began to fail in might,
216 For those with whom they had to fight
Set to their work with courage high
And stern resolve to do or die,
And strove with all their might and main
To drive them from the battle plain.
Now all this time of which I tell,
At which the victory was well
Contested, and on either side
224 English and Scots in prowess vied,
The Scottish followers, left behind
The victuals and the carts to mind,
Peasants and boys, when they knew well
That their good lords fought hard in fell
Encounter with their country’s foes,
A stout man of their number chose
To lead them to the battle fray,
232 And, feigning banners to display,
They waved on spear-shafts to the wind
The largest sheets that they could find,
Declaring they would join the fight
And help according to their might.
When thereto all had given assent,
In a great crowd they onward went,
Some fifteen thousand men arrayed
240 With banners o’er their heads displayed,
Advancing boldly to the fight

As if they had been men of might.

'Twas thus that rabble rout appeared,
As in great haste the field they neared,
And all at once began to cry

“Slay, slay, upon them hastily.”

So they advanced, a threatening band,

248 But, ere they could come close at hand,

The foe, already drawing back

Before the Scotsmen's fierce attack,

When they saw such a company

Come shouting loud their battle cry,

Thought a fresh host, as many more

As those with whom they fought before,

Had been till then concealed from view.

256 So at the sight, it is most true

They were in courage so depressed

That even the boldest and the best

Would gladly have been far away,

Had honour not compelled their stay.

Observing all those signs of fear,

King Robert knew the end was near.

He shouted loud his battle cry

264 And with his valiant company

Pressed on his foes so fast, that they

Were stricken with extreme dismay,

And gan to waver everywhere.

Then all the Scotsmen who were there,

Seeing the foe shrink from the fight,

Assailed their wavering ranks with might,

Till they broke up in many a band

272 And knew defeat was close at hand.

So some their ground no longer stood ;

But those who were of bolder mood

And were ashamed to take to flight,

Though with great loss, maintained the fight,

And would not from the fray withdraw.

Now when the King of England saw,

How his great host was falling back

280 Afraid to face the Scotch attack

(For the Scotch battles in their strength

Bore them so boldly, that at length

Their cowed opponents had no might
To stand against them in the fight)
He was himself so much astounded
That, by his company surrounded,
Five hundred men in armour bright,
288 In headlong haste he took to flight,
And straight to Stirling made his way.
But yet I have heard some men say,
That it was bold Sir Amery,
Who, when he saw the English flee,
Against the King's will seized his rein
To lead him from the battle plain.

Now when Sir Giles de Argenté
296 Saw that King Edward meant to flee
And had his troop for flight arrayed,
He to him rode in haste and said,
“ Sir, since I see it must be so,
That you and yours away will go,
I needs must bid my liege good-bye.
From stricken battle-field to fly
Has never been my wont. I choose
304 Rather to die than honour lose.”
So speaking, round his horse he wheeled
And sought again the battle-field.
Then, shouting loud his battle-cry,
Like one who did not fear to die,
He charged the valiant Scottish band
O'er which Sir Edward had command.
They who his gallant onset met
312 So many spears against him set,
That pierced by many a deadly thrust
Both knight and horse rolled in the dust.
So fell Sir Giles de Argenté,
And pity 'twas that he should be
Thus slain, who was the third best knight
That in those days went forth to fight.
Honour in many wars he sought,
320 And thrice with Saracens he fought,
And, each time that he met them, two
In the opposing ranks he slew.

But now this noble knight was dead.

- And when they knew their King was fled,
 The English would not longer stay ;
 By different paths they broke away,
 So hotly by the Scotsmen chased,
 328 That, in their panic-stricken haste,
 They kept no order in their ranks.
 Some, hurrying to the river banks,
 Threw themselves in the Forth, and there
 The most part of them drownéd were.
 The burn of Bannock soon was filled
 With all the men and horses killed,
 Stepping on which, the waters broad
 336 You might have passed with feet dryshod.
 The rabble rout of striplings raw
 Ran to the Bannock when they saw
 The English floundering in its bed,
 And without mercy smote them dead.
 It was indeed a piteous sight :
 Of folk in such an evil plight
 I never heard in any land,
 344 For on one side their foes did stand
 Ready without remorse to slay,
 And on the other side there lay
 The Bannock burn, whose turbid course
 Was then so deep and full of force,
 That no one could across it ride.
 So they were forced there to abide,
 And some were killed and some were drowned,
 352 None who fled thither safety found :
 However, as I heard men say,
 Many escaped another way.
 ✓ ~~A~~ Meanwhile King Edward with his train
 To Stirling's hold his way has ta'en,
 And would have entered in, for he
 Knew not at all which way to flee.
 The Mowbray said, " This castle still
 360 Is yours. Do with it what you will.
 But if you enter, you shall see
 That it will soon invested be,
 And there is none in English land.
 Who its relief will take in hand,

- And castles unrelieved, my liege,
Cannot for ever stand a siege.
Be comforted. Collect your force
368 And take around the Park your course.
Let all your train in close array
Escort you, Sir, upon your way.
Those who pursue will courage lack
So strong a party to attack.”
- Yielding to such wise words assent,
Beneath the castle wall they went
And by the Table Round they passed,
376 Till, compassing the Park, at last
To Lithgow keep they made their way.
But they will find that, ere they may
Attain their goal, they'll be aware
Of company they well could spare.
For good Sir James of Douglas came
Up to the King from him to claim
Permission to pursue the foe,
384 Which was not long withheld, I trow.
But scarcely sixty horse he led :
However in pursuit he sped
The English King to overtake.
Now let him with his horsemen make
What speed he can, and we must tell
What fortune in that chase befell.
- So now at last my tale is done
392 Of the great battle lost and won,
When in a narrow space of ground
Were thirty thousand killed or drowned.
Some captured were in chase or fight,
While others saved themselves by flight.
The Earl of Hereford had fled
And a great force behind him led
Straight on to Bothwell Castle tower,
400 Which place was held until that hour
In fealty to England's throne.
Within was Walter Gilbertston
Who held the castle in his care.
The Earl of Hereford went there,
And was received within the wall

And fifty of his men withal.

Lest they should gain the upper hand,

408 The castle warden gave command,

They should in separate rooms be placed ;

The others started off in haste,

But, ere they could their homes regain,

Three-fourths were prisoners made or slain.

Then, too, Sir Maurice de Barclay

From the great battle rode away

With many Welshmen in his train,

416 The country of whose birth was plain,

Since, but for linen shirts, they had

No clothes and went about unclad.

They hasted all upon their way,

But many of their company,

Ere they could leave the land, were ta'en

And many more of them were slain.

This way and that the routed host

424 Fled from the battle, but the most

Sought Stirling Castle in their flight.

In truth it was a wondrous sight

To see the crags that here and there

Around the castle crowded were

With fugitives who, sore bestead,

Had thither for protection fled.

Seeing there were so many men

432 Gathered below the castle then,

The good King Robert thought it wise,

For fear the foe again should rise,

Not to allow his men to stray

Far in pursuit, and, truth to say,

The English King to this command

Owed his return to his own land.

Now when the battle-field was cleared

440 And all their foes had disappeared,

The victors ransacked all the ground

And took whatever there they found,

As clothing, gold and silver rings,

And vessels and all others things

The English had left lying there.

Such heaps of spoil collected were,

- That many men grew great in power
448 From riches gathered in that hour.
When all was done, as I have said,
The King a numerous force arrayed
The English fugitives to smite
Assembled on the rocky height,
Who, lacking heart to make defence,
Surrendered and were taken thence
And captives to King Robert sent.
- 456 All the remaining day was spent,
Now that the toil of war was o'er,
In gathering heaps of plundered store ;
And when the English, late equipped
In splendid armour, all were stripp'd,
'Twas a strange sight to see outspread
Bare bodies of so many dead :
Two hundred pairs of spurs were ta'en
- 464 From English knights in battle slain.
They found the corse of Gilbert Clare,
The Earl of Gloucester, lying there,
Sir Giles de Argenté as well
And Payne Tiptot. I cannot tell
The other English knights that died.
- There fell upon the Scottish side
Two worthy knights for valour famed,
- 472 The one was William Vepont named ;
The Rose, Sir Walter, was the other,
Loved dearly by his monarch's brother.
Sir Edward's love for him was such,
That scarce he loved himself so much,
And, when he knew his friend was dead,
His heart with grief so sorely bled,
That, in the frenzy of despair,
- 480 With gloomy look he would declare
He wished the field had been unfought
Which such bereavement to him brought :
Except Sir Walter 'tis not known
That he for any man made moan.
He loved him for his sister's sake,
Whom he his paramour did make,
Scorning his own wife, Isabel.

- 488 Therefore much enmity befell
 'Twixt him and David, Athol's lord,
 Her brother, who the slight abhorred.
 Lord Athol captured, on the night
 When the two Kings prepared to fight,
 The food at Cambuskenneth stored,
 Assailed the camp, put to the sword
 Of the defenders not a few,
- 496 And William Herth, their captain, slew,
 For which he was thereafter sent
 From Scotland into banishment,
 And of his lands, as forfeit seized,
 The King disposed what way he pleased.
- When, as I said before, the plain
 Was stripped and nothing did remain,
 The King and all his company,
- 504 Whose hearts were full of jollity
 For the great triumph won that day,
 Towards their quarters took their way
 To rest, because they weary were.
 But for the Earl, Sir Gilbert Clare,
 Who in the battle had been slain,
 The King felt in his heart much pain
 Because of their affinity,
- 512 And ordered that his soul should be
 Prayed for with masses through the night.
- Next day, as soon as it was light,
 The King chose early to go out,
 And, as it chanced to come about,
 An English knight came wandering by,
 Who had escaped each hostile eye.
 His arms were in a bush concealed,
- 520 And he had waited on the field,
 Till, seeing the good King draw nigh,
 He went towards him hastily.
 This knight, Sir Marmaduke the Twengue,
 So managed to approach the King,
 And, bending down, embraced his knee.
 "Welcome, Sir Marmaduke," said he,
 "Tell me, whose prisoner art thou?"
- 528 "No man's," he said, "but to you now

- I yield me at your will to be.”
“ And I receive thee, Sir,” said he.
Sir Marmaduke some time remained
In the King’s court well entertained,
And in the end he went away
Unransomed, and in good array,
With many costly gifts in hand
536 Returning to his native land.
Such generous prince who would not prize !
Sir Marmaduke upon this wise
Yielded himself, as I have said ;
Sir Philip Mowbray also made
Submission, yielding up the strong
Castle that he had held so long.
Afterwards, being treated well
544 And given land whereon to dwell,
He truly served with all his power
King Robert till his dying hour.
Now must we of the Douglas tell
And all that in the chase befell.
Few were the horsemen that he led
But in great haste he onward sped,
And, as he by the Torwood went,
552 There met him riding o’er the bent
Sir Lawrence of Abernethy
With fourscore in his company,
Who, till then with the English siding,
Was with his troop to battle riding,
But, upon hearing how things were,
Left their alliance then and there,
And to the Douglas swore anew
560 That he would to the King be true.
Then both pursued the English fast,
And, ere the flying monarch passed
Through Lithgow town, they came with those
Who followed them so near the foes,
That there was not an arrow’s flight
Between them ; but they could not fight,
Being so few, the armed throng
568 Of fugitives five hundred strong,
Who rode along a sorry train

In hurried flight with loosened rein,
 For some skilled captain in command
 Marshalled so well the English band,
 That, as was plain, if any dared
 Attack them, they were well prepared.

- So the Lord Douglas and his men,
 576 Although they would not venture then
 On the main force to make attacks,
 Yet followed closely on their tracks,
 Seizing whoever lagged the last :
 If any one a short stone-cast
 Remained behindhand, he was slain
 Or quickly overpowered and ta'en ;
 Though his friends loved him ever so,
 584 They dared not for him strike a blow.
 Thus sternly Douglas did maintain
 The hot pursuit, till with his train
 King Edward came to Wynchburgh town,
 And with his followers lighted down
 To give their weary horses rest.

- The good Lord Douglas thought it best
 To make a halt beside them there,
 592 Because he saw the English were
 So many and arrayed aright,
 Aye ready, if need were, to fight,
 While he had few men at his back
 And could not openly attack :
 So, hoping some good chance to find,
 He followed ever close behind.
 Some little while they there abode,
 600 Mounted again, and forward rode.
 The Douglas always close at hand
 Allowed them not to pause or stand
 A moment in their headlong flight.
 If any was in such a plight
 That he behind the rest must stay,
 He was at once his foemen's prey.

- Thus Douglas urged the chase amain,
 608 Until King Edward and his train
 At last came to Dunbar, where he
 And several of his company

- Were by Earl Patrick entertained,
Who on the English side remained.
This lord refreshed those weary men
With meat and drink enough, and then
He sent the King by sail and oar
616 To Bamborough on his native shore :
Their horses left outside the wall
Quickly in Scottish hands did fall.
Those English, who were not allowed
Within Dunbar, went in a crowd
Making their way for Berwick straight,
But, ere they reached the city gate,
A number of them, sooth to say,
624 Were killed or captured on the way ;
Yet still a remnant sore distressed,
In Berwick refuge found and rest :
So those escaped from deadly fear
And, since to Douglas it was clear
That further labour would be vain,
He went back to the King again.

King Edward thus to England came.

- 632 Lo, Fortune is a fickle dame.
She sometimes smiles and soon again
Pierces the heart with grief and pain,
Her fancies varying hour by hour.
To what a pitch of fame and power
High on her wheel she raised this King,
When he did into Scotland bring
Under his banner such a force
640 Of knights and bowmen, foot and horse,
Equipped, as you have heard me say,
In war's magnificent array !
Then in a night and day's short space
She brought him to such dire disgrace,
That he with seventeen in a boat
To his own land was fain to float.

- King Robert had no cause to mourn,
648 When thus she chose her wheel to turn,
Since on his side it rose full well
When on the other side it fell :
For if upon a wheel you place

Two lots opposing face to face,
 When one is high, the other's low.
 Then Fortune may, as well you know,
 Turn round her wheel, and what was high
 656 Before, now on the ground must lie,
 And what before was lying low,
 Will upwards to the summit go.
 And so it happened in this case ;
 When Scotland's King was in disgrace
With fortune, then was lifted high
 The King of England's majesty,
 But, when King Edward's glory failed,
 664 King Robert high and higher scaled
 The heights of fortune, and fulfilled
 Whatever enterprise he willed.

The good King still in Stirling stayed,
 And by his orders now were laid
 With honour due in holy ground
 The lords whose bodies dead were found,
 The other corpses were concealed
 672 In great pits on the battle-field :
 Then he demolished to the ground
 The castle with its towers around.
 To Bothwell Castle next the King
 Sent with a princely following
 Sir Edward Bruce, for he heard word
 That the great Earl of Hereford
 With other men of note was there.
 680 Soon to Sir Edward yielded were
 Together with the castle wall
 Those English captives one and all.
 The Earl to Stirling they did bring
 Where he was by the courteous King
 Well lodged, until it was arranged
 That prisoners should be exchanged.
 He then to England went away
 688 Nor any ransom had to pay,
 Because from their imprisonment
 Three Scottish captives home were sent,
 King Robert's queen, dame Isabel,
 Her daughter Marjory as well,

And bishop Robert, who grew blind
In English prison long confined.

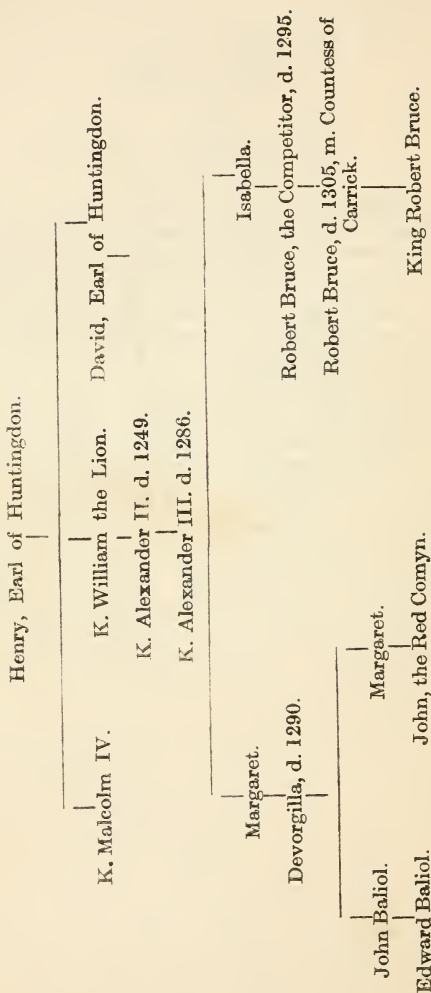
- The Earl was changed then for those three,
696 And, when they were from prison free,
King Robert's daughter, who was fair
And also his apparent heir,
Was joined in holy wedlock's band
To the high Steward of the land,
Sir Walter, and by grace of heaven
To them a man-child soon was given,
Who, called by his grandfather's name,
704 In course of time our King became.
He took the sceptre of the land
From his good uncle David's hand,
Who reigned for forty years and two.
When I compiled this story true,
Robert the Second had attained
His sixtieth year of age, and reigned
Five years ; since Christ was first alive
712 On earth had passed years seventy-five
And thirteen hundred ; and no more
Since good King Robert's death than four
And forty winters had gone by.
God grant that of his ancestry
Good Kings may rise to rule the land,
And guard the people with strong hand,
And right and loyalty uphold
720 As he did in the days of old

NOTES.

BOOK I.

54.—Nearness of degree is not counted here, as it is in l. 56, by number of successive generations. By such a mode of reckoning Bruce, the Competitor, was not in “as near,” but in *nearer* degree of descent from the Earl of Huntingdon, and King Robert Bruce was in *less near* degree. Here equal nearness of degree means equally direct descent. In this sense the Bruces and the Baliols were in as near degree to William the Lion, because they were both direct descendants of his brother.

56.—The claim of the Baliols was based on the fact that they were descended from the eldest daughter of David, Earl of Huntingdon, brother of King William the Lion, while the Bruces were descended from the second daughter. The Bruces, on the other hand, claimed preference over the Baliol family because, in the inheritance of the crown, Bruce, the Competitor, the Earl of Huntingdon’s grandson, as a male, came before John Baliol’s mother, the Earl of Huntingdon’s grand-daughter, and therefore, before her son, who could only succeed to his mother’s weaker claim. The strength of this argument may be estimated by the fact that, in 1238, Alexander II., being then childless, had declared Bruce, the Competitor, to be his heir in accordance with the Grand Council of the realm, which then “decreed and adjudged by all their own laws and by the imperial and other laws, that the son born of the second sister should inherit in preference to the daughter born of the eldest sister,” that is to say, that Bruce should be preferred before Devorgilla, John Baliol’s mother, who was then living. Of course this claim to the succession would be inherited by subsequent heads of the Bruce family. Bruce, the Competitor, also argued that he personally had a preference over John Baliol, because, being his uncle, he was a generation nearer in descent from the Earl of Huntingdon. But this argument is omitted by Barbour, as it did not strengthen the claim of his hero, King Robert Bruce. All this will be made clearer by reference to the following genealogical table :—



63, 64.—This is intended to be a *reductio ad absurdum*. Such a conclusion would be opposed to the principle followed when the succession was settled in 1238.

86.—Their own King was Alexander III., who died in 1286.

115.—We learn from a contemporary letter that the Scottish people called Edward I. "Le Roi Coueytous."

140.—It was really twenty years since Edward had been warring against the Saracens. Scott, in *Marmion*, 3, xxiii., commits a similar anachronism in the opposite direction, and represents him as "waging holy war in Palestine" in 1262, at the time of the battle of Largs, eight years before he went there.

241.—This is the Platonic doctrine that the knowledge of contraries is the same, that you cannot know a thing properly without knowing its contrary.

271.—Compare *Odyssey* xvii. 322, where it is asserted that "Zeus takes away half the excellence of a man when the day of slavery comes upon him."

343.—*Cato*, not the elder or younger Cato of Roman history, but a moral writer of the fourth century often quoted by Chaucer and others in the Middle Ages. He is probably the "wise man" of l. 121.

374.—This Douglas was commonly distinguished as "the good Sir James." See l. 29.

455.—A characteristic instance of the reckless way in which Barbour exaggerated the numerical odds against the Scots.

477.—See l. 28, and Introduction, p. xxxi.

481.—Here Barbour represents Bruce as actuated not by personal ambition, but by sympathy with the Scottish people. Compare the Latin lines he used to repeat which are quoted in the Introduction, p. xiii.

525.—To Dares and Dictys were attributed narratives of the siege of Troy, regarded as historical works in the Middle Ages. Dares was a Trojan priest mentioned in the *Iliad*, v. 9; Dictys was supposed to be a Cretan who went to Troy with Idomeneus.

583.—Compare xi. 23, and Burns :—

The best-laid schemes of mice and men
Gang aft agley.

588.—Barbour often gives us an inkling of what is going to happen later on. Compare ix. 465, xi. 333, xiii. 379, Buik of Alexander i. 61 and Aeneid x. 503.

BOOK II.

33.—Bruce was practised in the art of dissimulation, so that he could conceal his grief or anger under a smiling countenance. Compare i. 482, iii. 676, and Aen. i. 209. That Comyn had really given King Edward information

about Bruce's designs seems to be implied by the indicative "accusaverat" in the account given of the matter from the English point of view by Hemingburgh, who says that at the meeting Bruce "*coepit improperare ei de seditione sua quod eum accusaverat apud regem Angliae!*"

36.—According to the usual story Comyn was only wounded by Bruce, and was finally despatched by Kirkpatrick, one of Bruce's followers.

43.—Here Barbour blames Bruce not so much for killing the Comyn as for his sacrilege in violating the sanctuary of the altar.

88.—Thomas the Rhymer of Ercildoune, to whom many prophecies of historical events were attributed, died towards the end of the thirteenth century.

92.—Compare i. 356, and the Squire in Chaucer's Prologue, l. 100, who "carf before his fader at the table."

96.—Tables at this time generally consisted of moveable boards, which were at meal-time laid upon trestles. The Franklin's dormant (permanent) table in Chaucer's Prologue, l. 353, was an exception indicating his unceasing hospitality.

109.—Young Douglas in speaking to the Bishop employs the respectful plural pronoun "you," while the Bishop employs the familiar singular "thou." This distinction is kept up consistently in Barbour, as in Shakespeare. Compare v. 226-251, v. 596, 597, 602, 614-620, vi. 656-663.

144.—Barbour in imagination transports himself to the past, and utters a prayer for his heroes as if their fate were still uncertain. Cf. v. 585, vi. 674, x. 620. By this means he represents the deeds.

"Performed by many a stalwart knight,

As if the actors were in sight."—I. 19-20.

Scott is also very fond of this figure, as in his famous apostrophe to Bruce and Wallace in his narrative of the battle of Flodden (*Marmion* vi. 20). Perhaps his frequent employment of it is due to the influence of Barbour.

530.—No doubt we must accept Mackenzie's amendment "luffys" (loves) for the MS. "liffys" (lives). He points out that "luffys" is again used for beloved husbands in iii. 351.

531.—The text appears to be corrupt. When Adrastus' men were killed, Thebes was *not* taken, for the assault failed.

537.—In the text as it stands the syntax is hopelessly confused, and "Campaneus" is a nominative without a verb. According to classical authors Capaneus was killed in the first attack upon Thebes. But Lydgate, in his story of Thebes, and Barbour, following the French medieval version of the Theban wars, represent him as surviving and taking part in a later successful assault.

538.—Menesteus, or Mnestheus, is the leader of the Athenians in the *Iliad*. He succeeded Theseus as King, or, as the mediæval authors called him, Duke of Athens.

541.—*The King's request*, the request of King Adrastus.

547.—*The Duke*, Menesteus.

551.—Compare Scott's famous apostrophe to woman, concluding—

“When pain and anguish wring the brow
A ministering angel thou.”

BOOK III

71.—Barbour thinks it no compliment to compare Bruce to a Celtic warrior. He reveals the contempt in which the Highlanders used to be held by the Norman and Saxon lowlanders. For other expressions of this feeling see the *Fair Maid of Perth* and the last two lines of Scott's ballad on the Battle of Harlaw in the *Antiquary*.

84.—*Tholimar*, Ptolemy.

216.—In the Edinburgh MS., Scipio is called “the King.” Hart's printed edition (1616) reads “the ying” (the young).

518.—Barbour is here inconsistent. The case of women who weep when they are not distressed is not really an exception, if, as he has just maintained, shedding tears without distress cannot properly be called weeping.

523-526.—Compare Tennyson's picture of Enid at the happy hour when she was reconciled to her husband.

“She did not weep,

But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist,
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the rain.

557-564.—*Cf.* Forsan, et hæc olim meminisse juvabit, Aen. i. 203.

584.—Notice the realistic touch. Their hands unused to the oar were soon blistered. Compare Odyssey xxi. 150, and Scott's description of the Knight of Snowdon's rowing in Loch Katrine (*Lady of the Lake*, I. xxiv).

659.—*Angus*, Angus Oig Macdonald, to whom as the hero of his *Lord of the Isles*, Scott gives a name more euphonious in Saxon ears. It was to him that Bruce said on the eve of the battle, “My hope is constant in thee.”

688.—Compare the graphic line quoted by Cicero from an old Latin poet—

“Europam Libyamque rapax ubi dividit unda.”

BOOK IV.

18.—Loudon fort is Lochdon (Loch Doon) Castle.

26.—Barbour's indignation is here expressed in stronger language than we should expect to proceed from a Christian priest.

181.—Snowdown seems to have been another name for Kildrummy as well as for Stirling Castle. See *Lady of the Lake*, 6. xxvi.

211.—It is not quite clear why Edward thought that the borough in which he was to die was the borough of Jerusalem. Perhaps he heard the prophecy in Palestine when all his thoughts were centred on the capture of the Holy City.

228.—Compare *Paradise Lost*, vii. 190, and Satan's speech in the old English poem attributed to Cædmon—"That is to me of sorrows the greatest, that Adam, who was wrought of earth, shall possess my strong seat."

253.—Although in the *Bruce* the terms "English" (applied to men) and "England" are respectively opposed to "Scottish" and "Scotland," Barbour gives the name of Inglis (English) to the language spoken by both nations, except by the Highlanders of Scotland, whose Celtic language he translates into English (iii. 101), but does not happen to name. John of Fordun, his contemporary, calls the language of the Highlanders Scottish, and Barbour would probably have done the same, if he had happened to name it.

256.—This is an instance of the demonification of the heathen gods elaborately worked out by Milton in the first book of *Paradise Lost*. The deceitful prophecies uttered by the devils are referred to in the nineteenth stanza of the *Nativity Ode*. Compare also the prophecies that kept the word of promise to the ear, but broke it to the hope of Macbeth.

620.—For the superstitious beliefs about this mysterious light see the *Lord of the Isles*, 5. xvii. Sir Herbert Maxwell suggests that it may have been the work of farmers burning heather and gorse on their pastures.

748.—Necromancy is the second of the ways mentioned in l. 692.

BOOK V.

336.—This explains why the Douglas in *Marmion* (6, xiv.) swears by Saint Bride.

427.—One of his descendants, who followed his ex-

ample, declared that he would rather hear the lark sing than the mouse squeak.

483.—The MSS. have, instead of “Umphraville,” the name of “Bell,” which is inconsistent with vi. 3. See Mackenzie’s note, which shows that the mistake is in this line, and not, as Skeat thought, in vi. 3.

505.—In the *Prologue*, l. 284, Chaucer says he could not remember the Merchant’s name, which shows either that Chaucer was narrating a real pilgrimage, or that he was a master of the art of making a fiction appear like reality.

593-603.—Here the interchange of short, quick speech is dramatically appropriate to the situation.

BOOK VI.

95.—“Whistling” is the word employed by Barbour to express the noise made by what Somerville calls the bloodhound’s “snuffing nose” in the ardour of the chase. A friend suggests that Barbour really wrote “questing,” which in Malory’s *Morte d’Arthur* and elsewhere means “giving tongue,” as hounds do in following a scent.

111-114.—These four lines are inconsistent with l. 91 and l. 305, and are omitted in the Cambridge MS.

188.—The name of Tydeus is spelled by Barbour “Tedeus,” or “Thedeus.” The latter spelling looks like a cross between Tydeus and Theseus.

222.—The writers of the mediæval romances seem to have thought that Thebes was beyond the limits of Greece. See Chaucer’s *Anelida and Arcite*, l. 53, where Mars sets on fire the hearts of the peoples “of Thebes and Greece.”

344.—Here we have Aristotle’s doctrine of the golden mean illustrated by the virtue of courage, which is a mean between two extremes, namely, the excess (foolhardiness) and the defect (cowardice).

BOOK VII.

492.—Compare *Marmion*, 6, xxxi.—

“A sinful heart makes feeble hand”;
and Shakespeare’s—

“Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just.”

BOOK VIII.

97.—“Largs” is the English plural of the Gaelic *learg*, a hill slope. On account of its derivation it can

take the definite article as in the proverbial saying, " Out of the world and into the Largs."

179.—Bruce's object here, as at Bannockburr (xii. 298-300) was to choose a position in which the enemy could not take advantage of their superior numbers to attack his front or rear. But why did he leave an opening wide enough for five hundred men riding side by side ? Perhaps he thought that, if he made the space any narrower, the English would refuse battle.

228.—Compare these lines and the similar passage in xi. 465-472, with the description of the English advance in the *Roll of Caerlaverock*. The anonymous author of that poem relates how " the blaze of gold and silver and the radiance of rich colours displayed by the embattled host illuminated the valley which they occupied." See the extract from the poem given in Sir Herbert Maxwell's *Robert the Bruce*.

231.—Chaucer's Sir Thopas wore a fine hauberk

" And over that his coat-armour

As white as is a lily flower,"

which confirms Mackenzie's note that " Barbour must here mean the white linen garment covering the armour—the surcoat," and makes it probable that he compares the whiteness of the surcoat not to flour, but to flowers.

493.—The holding of Douglas Castle was such a perilous undertaking that the castle was called Castle Dangerous. Hence the title of Scott's novel based upon this incident.

BOOK IX.

308.—The Scottish Sea is the Firth of Forth.

509.—This Amery was a knight of St. John, and therefore a different person from Sir Aymer de Valence.

637.—*Cf.* Ne Hercules quidem contra duos.

BOOK X.

27.—Crechanben or Ben Cruachan is 3650 feet high, 756 feet lower than Ben Nevis.

123.—Alexander Macdougall was the father of John of Lorn.

445.—*Fastern's Eve* (the eve of the fast of Lent, Shrove Tuesday) is still celebrated under that name at Yetholm, a few miles from Roxburgh, with feasting and games. The Fastern festivities were suppressed by " the bigots of

the iron time," but according to *Mercurius Caledonius* were revived in 1661 with cock fighting and tilting at cocks with fagot sticks, and "in the evening the Virtuosi of the Pallat recreate themselves with lusty caudels, powerful cock broath, and natural crammed pullets."

BOOK XI.

23.—*Cf.* i. 583.

157.—Compare *Marmion* 5, xvii.

179.—Sir Giles de Argenté took his name from the Norman town of Argentan. He is more correctly called "De Argentine," in Scott's *Lord of the Isles*. In his Latin poem on the battle of Bannockburn (see Introduction, p. xiv.), Baston exclaims, "Noble Argentine, renowned fighter (pugil), sweet Giles, I scarce knew my mind when I saw thee fall."

BOOK XII.

22.—The Cambridge MS. calls this leathern stuff "qwyrbolle" (cuir bouilli, boiled leather), leather softened by hot water so as to make it plastic, after which it hardened in the shape it had been given. Such a hat would offer considerable resistance to a blow, and also be a protection against the sun.

56.—De Boune's hat was no doubt also made of qwyrbolle.

60.—*First Stroke*. It appears from the *Scalacronica* that De Boune was slain before the encounter with Clifford's squadron.

320.—Captain Norman in his lecture on Flodden remarks that a similar exemption was provided for the children of those killed at Flodden by an act of the Scottish Parliament, passed on English soil, before the battle was joined.

325.—He was afraid of his army being surprised by night, as at Methven.

351.—The similes in the *Bruce*, as in the *Beowulf*, are very few and very short. This one, however, gives a graphic touch to the story.

359.—With this dramatic mode of expressing public opinion compare the Homeric formula in *Iliad* vii. 178, xxii. 372.

458.—Compare the advice given by Sir Ingram in ii. 255-300, and followed by Sir Aymer de Valence. Perhaps, if Edward II. had listened to him, Bannockburn had been Flodden.

BOOK XIII.

31, 32, 36.—For the powerful effect produced by negative description see Burke on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, part ii., section vi. For silence in description of war compare *Iliad* iii. 8, and the descent of the Scottish army from Flodden Hill in *Marmion* 6, xxv. :—

“Nor martial shout, nor minstrel tone
Announced their march.”

293.—Edward II.'s example was followed, unfortunately for themselves, by two of his descendants, Charles I. at Naseby, and Charles Edward at Culloden. James IV., in the hour of defeat, provided better for his future reputation.

“He saw the wreck his rashness wrought ;
Reckless of life, he desperate fought,
And fell on Flodden plain.”

302.—In like manner Olaf Tryggvason in his last battle, when urged not to fight against superior numbers, replied, “I have never fled in battle. Let God dispose of my life, but I will never turn my ships to flight.” Compare also, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, l. 104.

360. Here Barbour or Mowbray seems to forget that according to his agreement with Edward Bruce (x. 824) the Castle, if not relieved by Midsummer, had to be surrendered. It appears, however, from the *Scalacronica* that Mowbray, having come into communication with the English army, considered the castle to have been relieved.

375.—The Round Table, or King's Knot, is an octagonal mound, on or around which were held rural pastimes, in which the courtiers perhaps personated the knights of King Arthur's Round Table.

611.—*Earl Patrick*, Patrick, Earl of March.

649.—Compare Enid's song—

“Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown ;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down.”

Shakespeare's *Richard II.* illustrates the rise of Bolingbroke and his corresponding fall by comparison with—

“Two buckets filling one another ;

The emptier ever dancing in the air,

The other down, unseen, and full of water.”

708-720.—These lines look as if they were meant for the conclusion of the poem. They resemble closely the final conclusion and the conclusions of the *Buik of Alexander* and of the *Metrical Version of the History of Hector Boece*. We may conjecture that Barbour originally intended to end his poem here, but that he was persuaded to continue his narrative to the death of Bruce, so that he had to provide a new conclusion at the end of the poem as finally enlarged.

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